

PlayStation2 | GameCube | Xbox | PC | GBA | Arcade | Retro

REVIEWED

RED DEAD REVOLVER [PS2/XB]
SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER [PS2/GC]
RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2 [XB]
PAINKILLER [PC]
SINGSTAR [PS2]
GALLEON [XB]
THE SUFFERING [PS2/XB]
ARMORED CORE NEXUS [PS2]
F-ZERO: GP LEGEND [GBA]

PREVIEW

KILLZONE

Sony employs Guerrilla tactics to combat Halo



100 million frags and counting...



REVIEW



Signed, sealed and finally delivered

RETRO

ATARI ST

The chart-busting MIDI marvel uncovered


eMag

Of all the genres of videogames, the first-person shooter is the one that's come to dominate our affections. *Rainbow Six 3* is by far the most played game on Xbox Live, while Sony is clearly desperate for *Killzone* to be the *Halo* beater that many have purported it to be. Such is the importance of the FPS that hardware can succeed or fail on the strength – or lack – of a killer shooter, and we have one game to thank for this.

Though not the first title of its kind, *Doom* forced its way into the gaming consciousness when id released the original game for download, which in turn paved the way for a slew of copycat titles and some genuinely ground-breaking games.

It is against this backdrop that we look to *Doom 3* – can id, against all odds, create another legendary FPS, or has the genre moved on? We'll know the answer to that soon, but one thing is certain, *Doom*'s place in videogame history is assured.

Simon Phillips,
Group Editor

ENGLISH

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GAME DISC PRECAUTIONS / MAINTENANCE

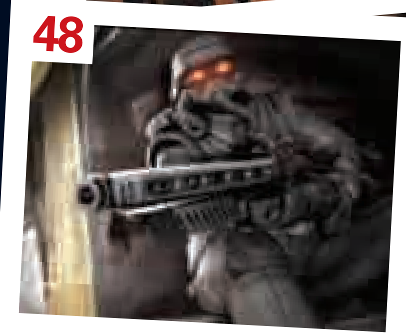
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Capcom, Jean Reno and the best feudal Japanese adventure yet – it can only be the latest in the Onimusha series…



NEWS

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FIND OUT WHERE TO GET THE ESSENTIAL STORIES WITH OUR QUICK GUIDE TO THE NEWS

NINTENDO'S OUTRAGEOUS MISFORTUNE

NINTENDO SPEAKS OUT FOLLOWING 'INACCURATE' PORTRAYAL IN BBC DOCUMENTARY

Television coverage of videogames is always something that arouses the interest of the industry, particularly when it promises something more in-depth than the usual dedicated shows. However, those who tuned into last month's BBC Three documentary on the history of Nintendo might have been surprised by what they saw – instead of a celebration of the company's success, it turned out to be a series of damning accusations levelled at one of the most established firms in the business.

The documentary (originally aired on 19 April) was broadcast as part of *Outrageous Fortunes*, a series that, according to BBC Three's website, 'investigates the real stories behind the success of… companies and questions at what price [they] have… made their millions'. Featuring programmes on other multi-million dollar companies such as Wal-Mart, Bacardi and Disney, the series' hard-nosed approach has raised a few eyebrows among the people it has criticised. However, Nintendo is the first company to speak out against what it considers to be unfair treatment at the hands of the broadcaster.

Since the broadcast there have been claims that the programme's focus on ex-Nintendo president Hiroshi Yamauchi's past business practices and the firm's bullish attitude towards succeeding in the games industry were unfairly skewed to give a negative view of the company. However, Nintendo's primary concerns lie with the programme's concentration on the issue of photosensitive epilepsy and, more importantly, what many have seen as an unjustified focus on specific Nintendo titles being to blame, rather than addressing the matter (or the ways that the industry has moved to deal with it) on a wider scale.

"The BBC programme was intended to be very sensational and a number of the reports were inaccurate, in particular the report on seizures," says Shelly Pearce, head of PR at Nintendo Europe. "Those close to the industry will recognise that this programme was not an accurate portrayal of Nintendo. However, we understand that parents with kids who play videogames – and indeed any fans of videogames in general – may be concerned by some of the content of the programme."

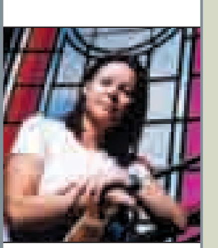
"This issue [of epilepsy] is something that the whole industry has been aware of for some time," says Pearce. "In the absence of established guidelines for videogames, Nintendo voluntarily prepared and implemented its own internal guidelines for game design and development in 1998. The use of these guidelines has led to a clear decrease in the incidence of seizures triggered by videogames in susceptible individuals as confirmed by medical literature and by a decrease in reported cases."

Nintendo was contacted by the BBC research department and helped to arrange a number of interviews for the show. According to Pearce, however, Nintendo's understanding of the programme's content was "different to the final outcome and we were not given the opportunity to view the finished show before it was aired on television."

games™ offered the BBC a chance to respond to Nintendo's criticisms of the show, but, unfortunately, it was unavailable for comment.

"THOSE CLOSE TO THE INDUSTRY WILL RECOGNISE THAT THIS PROGRAMME WAS NOT AN ACCURATE PORTRAYAL OF NINTENDO"

SHELLY PEARCE, NINTENDO EUROPE



Nintendo is looking out for its customers' welfare.



ELSPA says negative images of gaming must stop.



THE BLAME GAME

THE ACCUSATIONS ARE FLYING, SO WHO'S RIGHT?

THE GAMES DEVELOPER

Nintendo has been quick to dismiss the allegations that it allowed epilepsy-causing scenes to appear in its games. "It is important to note that videogames do not cause epilepsy," insists Shelly Pearce. "A small percentage of the population has a pre-existing neurological tendency to have seizures triggered by exposure to flashing lights or patterns. Medical research indicates that such people can have seizures triggered by television programmes, computer screens, videogames… [and] DVDs. Nintendo began including a warning about seizures with its products in the UK in 1993 – Nintendo was the first videogame company to provide such warnings. Nothing is more important to us than the health… of our players, therefore Nintendo will continue to keep abreast of the medical research in this area."

THE INDUSTRY BODY

The Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers' Association (ELSPA) takes a dim view of negative reporting of the games industry. "Unfortunately, those responsible for the promotion of media negatives have inevitably no experience or contact with videogames, have never played a game, or know anything or anyone associated with what is a mass culture," says Roger Bennett, ELSPA's director general. "They must be educated by the industry, preferably through ELSPA, unless evolution eventually replaces them with others more in tune with modern society." Despite the BBC show, however, Bennett feels that ELSPA has successfully promoted a positive view of gaming. "There are far more cases of positive media coverage – as opposed to negative – that go completely unnoticed, it seems," he says.

OUR TWO CENTS

Unfortunately, with positive television coverage of videogames being pretty rare (apart from on dedicated shows like *Gamer.tv* and *GamePad*), it's obvious that programmes such as *Outrageous Fortunes* can only serve to create a negative attitude towards the games industry among the general, non-gaming public. It seems such a shame that while other forms of the media are working hard to promote the industry and its successes, it only takes one piece of sensational coverage to put a serious dent in pro-gaming progress. The double-edged sword of making videogaming a more mainstream pastime and yet keeping it from being attacked by sensationalist coverage is one that is hard for the industry to avoid, but it's one that has to be confronted if any progress is to be made.

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



BIG-SCREEN SAMUS

Fans of *Metroid*'s Samus will be pleased to hear that she could be appearing in cinemas courtesy of action maestro John Woo. The news has been revealed in the *Hollywood Reporter* and it appears that Woo is planning to co-produce the movie, although he also has the option to direct. "This type of story has a proven track record of success with film audiences," Woo explained. And, let's face it, considering he recently hasn't been hitting the heights he used to, a successful franchise could be just what he needs.

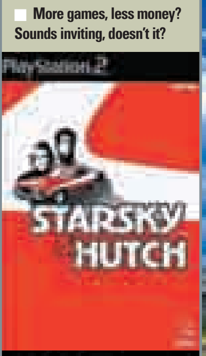




BEST NAME EVER

Tiger Telematics' Gametrac has had a bit of an identity crisis. The handheld machine has had to be renamed for legal reasons and is now known as the Gizmondo. Despite the silly name, Tiger Telematics is adamant that the Gizmondo will be a huge success. "The new name exemplifies the unique versatility of the device to provide many types of entertainment as chosen by the user," said Mike Carrender, CEO for Tiger Telematics. Let's hope the official name for Nintendo's DS is a lot better…





More games, less money? Sounds inviting, doesn't it?





The lower prices offered by 20:20 Games may force Sony into a price war it didn't expect.

GREYSTATION2 GOING CHEAP

SONY FURIOUS AS DISTRIBUTOR UNDERCUTS PRICES 'ILLEGALLY'



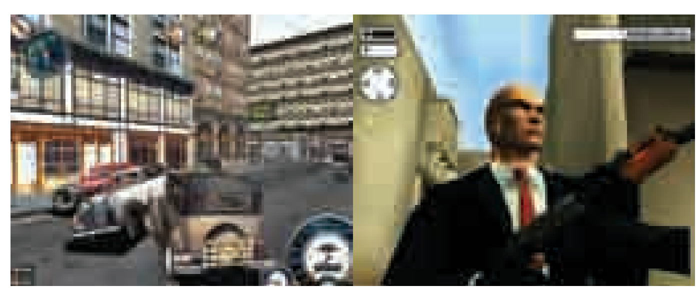


The issue of 'grey' imports is by no means a new one, but it is has recently made waves in the retail world. 20:20 Games has been on the receiving end of Sony's wrath since it started distributing imported European machines in the UK at substantially lower prices than Sony or its affiliates can offer. Such business is well reported in other media sectors, and from the moment supermarkets started lopping pounds off their chart entertainment products with such methods it was only a matter of time before the games industry encountered something similar.

The scandal concerns 20:20 offering PlayStation2 consoles (imported from elsewhere in the EU at reduced costs) to independent retailers for under £100 before VAT. Perhaps more harmful for high-street retailers are the bundle packs that 20:20 Games is able to offer, consisting of a PAL machine with five brand new games at a dealer price of only £150, around £50 less than the same stock would cost through the usual distribution channels.

The games in question are primarily cheaper titles but there are some good names among them: *Gran Turismo 3*, *The Getaway*, *Hitman 2*, *Star Wars: Starfighter*, *Space Invaders* and *Starsky & Hutch* all feature in the bundle deal and 20:20 has also been offering many chart products and new releases at significantly discounted trade prices. *Sonic Heroes*, *SOCOM II*, *True Crime*, *Mafia*… you name it, chances are 20:20 can frustrate established dealers like Centresoft by selling it cheaper than they ever could.

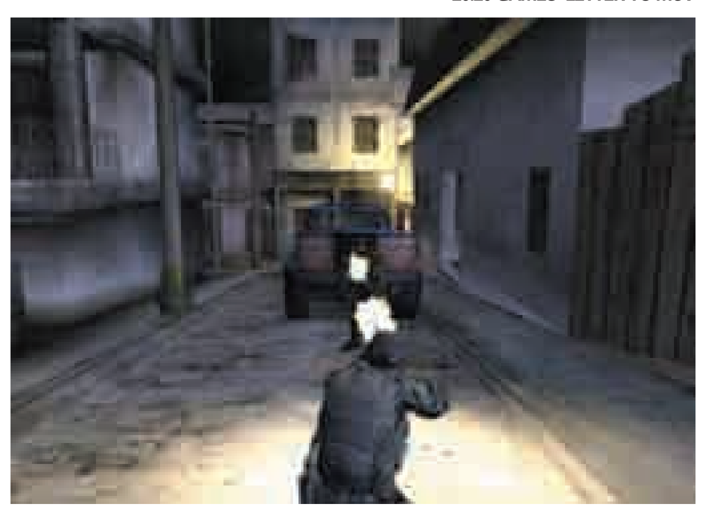
Sony's case for potential prosecution is hinged on the fact that for the imported PAL consoles to be sold in the UK, the power leads must have been replaced with unofficial and, more importantly,



The cheaper prices offered by these imports mean that independent retailers may be able to steal a march on larger stores by getting their stock for less, thereby passing on the price cuts to their customers.

"THE PACKAGING OF THE PRODUCT IS MULTI-LANGUAGE, WHICH MEANS IT IS FOR SALE THROUGHOUT EUROPE – OF WHICH THE UK IS CLEARLY A FUNDAMENTAL PART"

20:20 GAMES' LETTER TO MCV



Popular (and lucrative) titles like *SOCOM II: Navy SEALs* can be sold by 20:20 Games at discounted prices.

unapproved alternatives. Claims that this constitutes the machines having been 'modified' seem slightly exaggerated but Sony's concerns about the replacement cables certainly hold more water.

20:20 was quick to defend itself by way of a letter sent to games trade paper *MCV*, in which the company clearly stated that it is adamant that it has done nothing wrong.

"The PlayStations 20:20 has in stock have not been tampered with or modified by 20:20 and they are complete in their original packaging," the letter proclaims, going on to add: "The packaging of the product is multi-language, which means it is for sale throughout Europe – of which the UK is clearly a fundamental part."

So how can Sony combat this worrying (for it, at least) trend? Sadly, Sony was unable to comment on this issue, but it seems fairly obvious what needs to be done. The very fact that an external source is able to save so much money like this must surely prove that Sony's pan-European pricing needs to be addressed with some urgency. Whether this means uniform pricing throughout compatible regions or a price cut across the board is yet to be seen, but with 20:20 having more or less kneecapped Sony's case by packaging machines with official mains leads it seems unlikely that legal action against it would be successful.

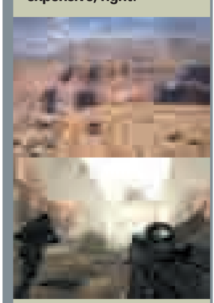
Without some kind of action, we could well see indie stores undercutting the major retail outlets by such substantial margins that the big stores would be forced into selling at a loss. We've got a bona fide price war on our hands and only Sony can put an end to it. Somehow…

THE FINAL CUT

Price slashes really are a double-edged sword. While the last Xbox reduction, for example, had an immediate and beneficial effect on sales, the cut that came mere weeks into the console's life was seen by many as a sign of weakness, of desperation, of failure.

Sony's console has already tumbled in price since its launch three and a half years ago but a shrewd firm such as this knows better than to simply reduce the price on a whim. Purely on hype, games like *Gran Turismo 4* and *Killzone* will sell consoles whether the machines cost £30 or £300, so if Sony is forced to announce a PS2 price drop due to a retail loophole it would be a real blow.

Still, surely the oldest next-gen console shouldn't be the most expensive, right?





NOT ANOTHER… PSP UPDATE

DAMN RIGHT, IT'S BETTER THAN YOURS…



If there's one thing we can't get enough of, it's the constant 'will they, won't they?' that surrounds the potential hardware inclusions on Sony's forthcoming PSP handheld. Even at this relatively early stage the feature list has changed several times, but now the wireless side of things has been called into question.

The wireless components for the machine have already been reported as being the 802.11 system, a more energy-hungry and expensive (yet substantially quicker) alternative to the Bluetooth option as sported by the N-Gage. It's no secret that Sony's networked dream is a lot grander than Nokia's – the vision of a fully networked house where every appliance can be instantaneously connected is at the centre of Sony's ideal and the PSP looks set to start the ball rolling. Early reports suggest that this will begin with some degree of PS3 connectivity and snowball from there, even potentially offering hardware upgrades at a later date to increase coverage and compatibility.

By association, we can deduce that the PlayStation3 would need some kind of wireless networking system of its own to make this all possible – not a huge revelation but an interesting one nonetheless, especially with the next round of console wars being fought on a handheld level the likes of which has never been seen. Nintendo's dual-screened gaming priority versus Sony's all-singing, all-dancing 'wonder handheld' is the match-up everyone's going to be talking about…

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



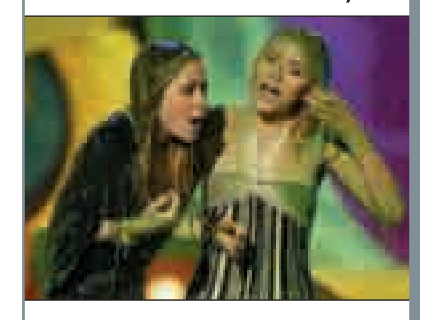
MICROSOFT GOING SHOPPING?

According to rumours, Microsoft is preparing to acquire popular RPG creator BioWare. Already enjoying massive success on the Xbox with *Star Wars: Knights Of The Old Republic*, BioWare is currently hard at work on *Jade Empire*. Of course, no-one at either company is willing to say anything but an announcement is expected at E3. If there is one genre where the Xbox is still suffering it's the role-playing game; having BioWare's talents on board would rectify this situation immediately.



DOUBLE TROUBLE FOR ACCLAIM

Poor Acclaim is no stranger to lawsuits and the latest it's received is from celebrity twins Ashley and Mary-Kate Olsen. Acclaim signed an agreement with the sisters' management, Dualstar Entertainment, in 1999 to produce Olsen-licensed games. Sadly, it seems the licence expired last year and Dualstar claims it is owed $177,000 by Acclaim. With the due date for payment now passed, Dualstar is filing for a final figure of around $660,000 and has said that all unsold Olsen titles must be destroyed.



CONFIRMED

METROID PRIME 2
We're positively rabid at the thought of seeing more of Samus' next Cube outing. Just how is that multiplayer option going to work?

HALO 2
We hope that Bungie uses E3 to tell the world about *Halo 2*'s new online features. And some rolling demos would be just great, thank you.

GRAN TURISMO 4
Yes, we know this was in last year's E3 coverage, but we need to see if all those slipped release dates are going to be worth it when this eventually appears.

WHAT WE'D LIKE TO SEE

PERFECT DARK ZERO
Rare's *Perfect Dark Zero* needs to be truly special in order to stand out, but rumours of a complete rebuild mean this could be great.

MARIO 128
The gameplay is 'so revolutionary' that Miyamoto-san hasn't shown this off in case other studios take his ideas… Apparently.

NICO
Apart from a few screenshots, nothing is known about this *Ico* sequel. What better time to spill the beans than a bustling E3?

ONCE MORE UNTO THE BREACH

THE GAMES INDUSTRY PREPARES FOR ANOTHER E3 EXTRAVAGANZA

Thanks to some awkward timing, by the time you read this E3 will be but a distant memory. But despite many companies remaining tight-lipped about their plans for this year's event, there's already plenty to get excited about.

Microsoft's Xbox Live service will be receiving a major boost thanks to Electronic Arts' decision to finally allow its games to appear on Microsoft's servers. We're expecting full details to be confirmed at E3, but at the moment it would appear that gamers should be able to play *Madden NFL 2005, NCAA College Football, NASCAR Thunder 2005* and *NBA Live* by the end of the year. However, it's the rumours of *Burnout 3, GoldenEye 2* and *Battlefield: Modern Combat* that we're really interested in.

As well as Live's exciting news, we're also expecting more details of *Halo 2* and, with any luck, further glimpses of Rare's line-up. It's been very quiet at the Twycross-based developer recently and we're hoping to see some concrete proof this year that the money Microsoft spent has been worth it.

Games expected from Nintendo include *Metroid Prime 2, Wind Waker 2* and no doubt further information about Kuju's GameCube version of *Advance Wars*. Of course, Nintendo's new handheld, the DS, will also be on display (along with a selection of titles) and if it's half as good as Nintendo is claiming then we're in for a treat. Perhaps the most interesting showing from Nintendo, though, will be its new hardware peripheral for the GameCube. The device is hoped to achieve for the Cube what the EyeToy managed for the PS2. What form the new peripheral will take is unknown, but we'd like to think that it's going to be linked to Nintendo's *Stage Debut* title.

Sony is as secretive as its peers, but we're expecting to see *Gran Turismo 4, Jak 3, Ratchet & Clank 3* and *Killzone* get heavily promoted. After Bizarre Creations' success with *Project Gotham Racing 2*, we're eagerly waiting to see if *GT4* will be a suitable alternative. Square Enix is also sure to have a huge showing and we're expecting to see playable code or videos of *Kingdom Hearts II, Final Fantasy XII* and *Dragon Quest VIII*.

Of course, E3 isn't all about games, and it's likely that we'll get our hands on the PSP, along with a firm idea of its release schedule. With Nokia's QD and Nintendo's DS fighting for the limelight, Sony will want to use E3 to blow the competition out of the water. It's a tall order, but Sony could triumph.



POOR CONSOLE SALES HIT MICROSOFT'S POCKET

MORE LOSSES FOR XBOX

It might be gaining credibility with the industry and consumers, but Microsoft's Xbox is continuing to lose money at an alarming rate. Microsoft has revealed its results for the first three months of this year, and although figures for the home and entertainment division have significantly risen, it's still managed to suffer an overall operating loss of some $209 million (around £116 million). The overall revenue for the division was $530 million (as opposed to last year's $453 million) but the huge operational loss proves that Microsoft is still finding it hard making any profit out of the Xbox.

Still, it's not all bad news. Microsoft as a whole managed to amass a profit of $1.32 billion in the same quarter, even after having to pay out large settlements to the likes of the European Commission. The Xbox also continues to gather momentum and software sales were up an impressive 30 per cent compared to what it achieved in the same period last year. With around $56 billion in cash available, Microsoft is hardly likely to give up its current share in the console market, but we wouldn't be at all surprised if it's busy figuring out how it can turn these continual losses into profit.



Sam Fisher needs to come to the Xbox's aid.

Popular titles still aren't helping sales.

games™ THE TOP FIVE

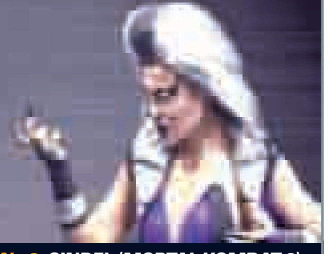
TERRIBLE GAMING HAIRCUTS

No.5 SOLID SNAKE (METAL GEAR)

Or is it Billy Ray Cyrus?

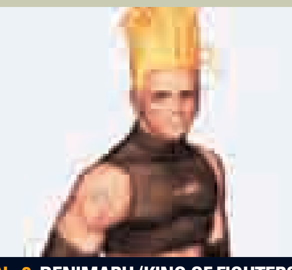
No.4 YUGI MOTO (YU-GI-OH!)

Easy on the hair gel, sonny



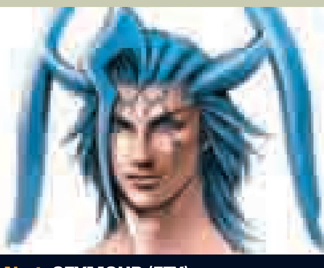
No.3 SINDEL (MORTAL KOMBAT 3)

Beehives are so Fifties



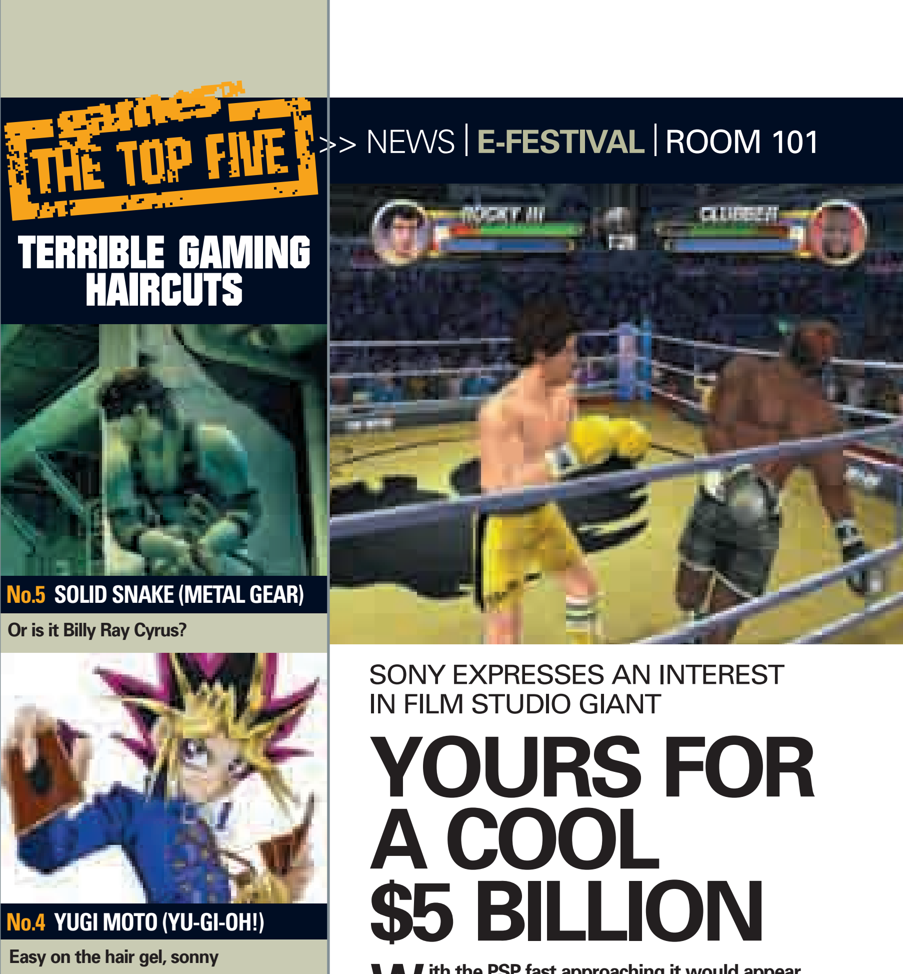
No.2 BENIMARU (KING OF FIGHTERS)

Isn't this a fire risk?



No.1 SEYMOUR (FFX)

Mmm, blue rinse – tasteful



SONY EXPRESSES AN INTEREST IN FILM STUDIO GIANT

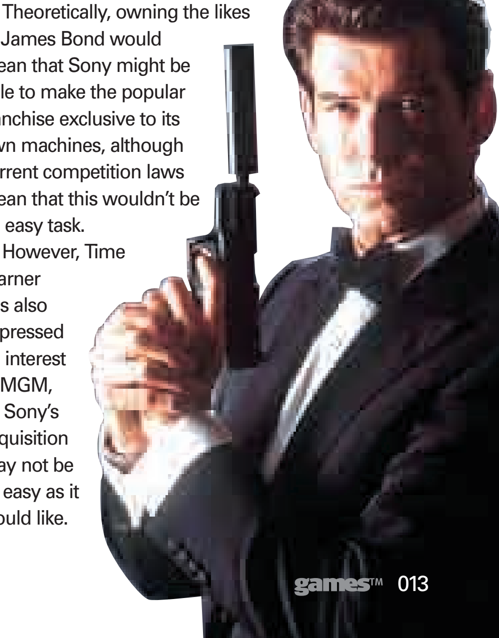
YOURS FOR A COOL $5 BILLION

With the PSP fast approaching it would appear that Sony is attempting to get its Universal Media Disc format (UMD) off to a flying start by launching a takeover bid for one of its largest rivals. Film studio MGM has already been sold three times by Kirk Kerkorian since he acquired it in 1969, but it would appear that the man who owns 75 per cent of the company is considering selling it for a fourth time. Providence Equity Partners and Texas Pacific Group are backing the bid and Sony is intending to offer $5 billion for the studio.

If Sony is successful it will mean two important things for the company: an absolutely massive back catalogue of films to help push its UMD format forward, and some hugely popular franchises that would include Rocky, Robocop and James Bond.

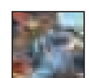
Theoretically, owning the likes of James Bond would mean that Sony might be able to make the popular franchise exclusive to its own machines, although current competition laws mean that this wouldn't be an easy task.

However, Time Warner has also expressed an interest in MGM, so Sony's acquisition may not be as easy as it would like.



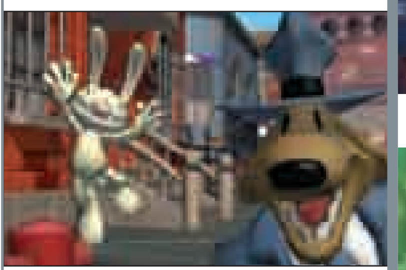
Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



LUCASARTS LOSSES

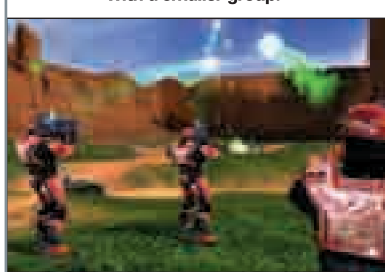
Things are not going well for LucasArts, as the US publisher/developer has had to make 29 members of staff redundant. Although some exciting games were announced by the firm at last year's E3, several of them have now been cancelled, including *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* and *Full Throttle 2*. Staff cuts are the least of LucasArts worries, though, as it has now been without a president for over six months. Simon Jeffery left late last year and the company has still not managed to find a replacement.





BUNGIE CO-FOUNDER JUMPS

Bungie co-founder Alexander Seropian has announced that he has formed a new development studio, Wideload Games, and is currently working on a new PC/Xbox title. While little is known about Wideload's first game, it will be based on the current *Halo* engine technology. Whether this means that it will be a first-person shooter hasn't been revealed, but at least Wideload Games has some firm foundations to build upon. The new team currently consists of only ten core members, but Seropian feels that it will be better to work with a smaller group.





MORE DEVELOPERS DESERT NINTENDO

KNIGHTS ERRANT

One of the GameCube's biggest problems right now is a lack of third-party support, so the news that two more developers have reassessed their relationship with the troubled machine isn't very encouraging. Silicon Knights was the first studio to announce that it will no longer exclusively support Nintendo as a second-party developer, then Factor 5 revealed that it will not be making any more titles for the Cube.

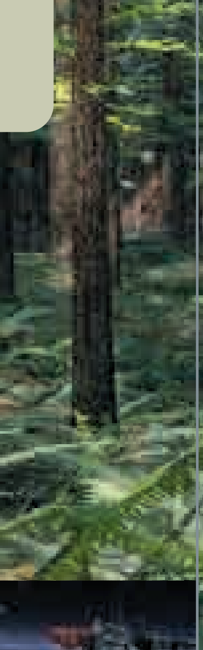
Although Silicon Knights' *Eternal Darkness* proved to be a highly atmospheric alternative to Capcom's *Resident Evil* franchise, poor sales scuppered any chances of a sequel appearing on Nintendo's machine. Even the studio's re-imagining of the PlayStation's *Metal Gear* has done little to trouble the charts, so it's perhaps not surprising that the companies have called it a day.

"Silicon Knights and Nintendo have agreed to mutually part ways," Silicon Knights' studio president, Denis Dyack, told US website IGN.com. "It's possible that we may do another game with Nintendo, actually. It just means that we've decided to break our exclusivity with Nintendo." As yet, we're not sure whether the studio's GameCube project *Too Human* will appear on the console, but we'd imagine that the interesting-looking title will resurface on at least one machine in the near future.

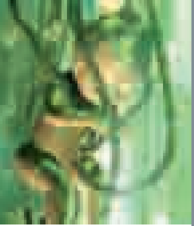
Days after this announcement, Factor 5 revealed that it would not produce any more titles for the Cube, though the firm's president, Julian Eggebrecht, did not say which consoles the San Rafael-based firm would be working with.

While some may suggest that this augurs doom for the GameCube, Nintendo recently established a fund in order to provide cash for future mergers and acquisitions. Bandai is just one company that's been previously linked with Nintendo, but according to Japanese business publication *Toyo Keizai*, Nintendo is looking to acquire technologies that it currently lacks.

While we're dismayed at the departure of two more companies from the Nintendo fold, this isn't as bad as it might seem. The likes of SEGA, Capcom and Electronic Arts continue to pledge their support, and E3 should deliver plenty of promising titles – the likes of *Resident Evil 4* should assure gamers that there's plenty of life left in the GameCube.



SK's *Too Human* may still appear on the GameCube.





SEPARATED AT BIRTH

games™ tracks down those videogame lookalikes

Bald head, big mouth hard-man reputation – is it PC Kid, or has *EastEnders'* Steve McFadden been moonlighting again?



GAMERS' GLASTONBURY?

BRITAIN TO HOST NEW GAMING E-FESTIVAL

After the success of last year's Edinburgh Game Festival, it would appear that 2004 is going into computer-show overdrive. As well as ECTS, a repeat of the Edinburgh Game Festival, and the European Games Network, this year will see a brand new event called e-Festival taking place in the summer.

The event has been designed with the intention of putting the fun back into computing and gaming and will include five separate shows that should appeal to consumers and professionals alike. It will be held at Stoneleigh Park near Coventry between 30 July and 1 August, and visitors will be able to camp at the site in order to create a festival atmosphere.

The e-Festival's director, Graeme Kidd, is expecting great things from the event. "Everyone we have been talking to… as our plans have been developed has been universally excited by the concept and supportive of the event," he said. "Some major names are poised to sign our contracts now the venue has been secured, and we have been building some very effective partnerships. We want to see e-Festival put the UK back on top of the international pile of computing events, and with the help and participation of the industry we'll get it there."

If Kidd can deliver on his promises, e-Festival could well be the UK gaming event of the year. Needless to say, we'll be joining the other 40,000 expected visitors and seeing what all the fuss is about. You can find out more and book tickets at www.e-fest.co.uk



Graeme Kidd – the Michael Eavis of gaming?

CAPCOM IN CLOVER

NEW STUDIO AND TITLES ANNOUNCED

After significant success with Production Studio 4, Capcom has unveiled its latest development studio and the titles it will produce. Although Clover Studio will be wholly owned by Capcom, it's actually regarding itself as an independent developer and has replaced several smaller development studios that have since closed down.

Atsushi Inabu, the producer behind *Steel Battalion* and *Viewtiful Joe*, will head the studio and will be joined by Hideki Kamiya and Shinji Mikami (creators of the *Devil May Cry* and *Resident Evil* franchises respectively). "I'm pleased to support the formation of an independent studio whose mission is to develop creative games that are innovative and inspire the future of gaming," said Capcom's president and CEO, Kenzo Tsujimoto.

One of the studio's first games seems to fit this bill. *Okami* is inspired by Japanese mythology and places the player in the role of Amaterasu, the Shinto goddess of the sun. After being transformed into a wolf Amaterasu must restore colour and light to the world. Other projects include *Viewtiful Joe 2*, which is set to be as enjoyable as the original GameCube title, and the PS2 version of *Viewtiful Joe* which features *Devil May Cry*'s Dante as a playable character.

Clover Studio boasts big names and big games.

GAMES ROOM 101

THE NEGATIVE SIDE OF VIDEOGAMING

NO.19: WORST. REPORTING. EVER.

As anyone who reads the news will know, the vilification of videogames is nothing new. However, the recent media attention that the games industry has received has really made us angry, if only because it proves that sensation is far more appealing than the actual facts.

Take, for example, a story in *The People* on 18 April that highlighted an expert's discovery that, 'Nintendo TV games can kill' – despite the fact that the epilepsy warnings it calls for are already printed in nearly all game manuals. What's more, to single out only a handful of Nintendo titles rather than addressing the problem of the medium itself is preposterous.

However, this story stemmed from the BBC's documentary *Outrageous Fortunes*, which turned out to be less of an informative piece on the history of Nintendo with the occasional skeleton in the closet (as it promised to be), and more a case of one uninformed reporter attempting to display one of the biggest names in the industry in the worst light possible.

Not only is this kind of reporting tantamount to a witch hunt, but it demonises the whole industry – exactly what it doesn't need if games are to be accepted as mainstream entertainment.

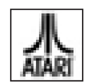


The documentary made Yamauchi-san sound like Stalin. Possibly worse…

Epilepsy warnings have been around for years, despite what critics say.

Data Stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



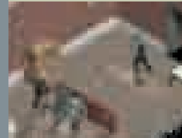
INFINIUM EXPANDS

Kathy Schoback and Wallace Poulter have become the latest industry veterans to join Infinium Labs' rapidly growing senior management team. Poulter will become director of publisher relations and previously worked for both Atari and Apple, while Schoback (who has held positions at SEGA and Eidos) will become the vice president of content strategy. "It's an exciting time, we're building a team," enthused Kevin Bachus, Infinium Labs' president. "I spent a lot of time personally trying to recruit them, with their enthusiasm being the thing that struck me most strongly." Expect more news on Infinium's Phantom console after E3.





The new Rockstar Leeds will make GBA and SP titles.



Mobius' mini *Max Payne* turned a few heads.

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

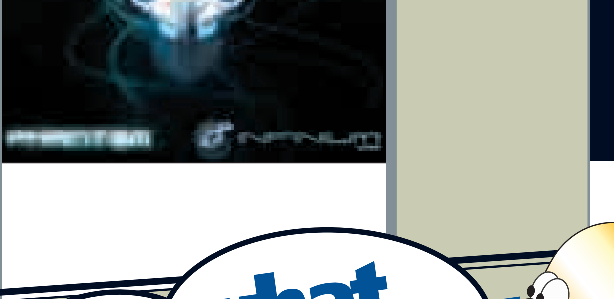
TAKE 2 EXPANDS BUT SAYS GOODBYE TO ITS CEO

Take 2 has enjoyed mixed fortunes recently. While it's added British developer Mobius to its rapidly growing family, it's also had to deal with the resignation of CEO Jeffrey Lapin. Although no official reason has been given for Lapin's departure, Take 2's share price suffered a rapid fall after the surprise announcement (Lapin was CEO for only 18 months) and it's thought that the delay of several key titles has not helped matters. The publisher and developer recently had to slash its financial forecasts and is now revealing a 15 per cent loss on sales of $170 million, as opposed to the expected forecast of 33 per cent profit of $220 million.

On a brighter note, Mobius (creator of the GBA's visually stunning *Max Payne* title) is now being renamed Rockstar Leeds and will make games for the GBA and PSP.

"We were really impressed with the Mobius development team from the time they began work on the Game Boy Advance version of *Max Payne*," said Rockstar's president, Sam Houser. "They bring a uniquely progressive vision to the titles they develop and we believe this studio is ahead of the industry on next-generation handheld development."

We're hoping that Rockstar Leeds will be resurrecting the GBA's long-overdue *GTA* title. After all, if *Max Payne* on the GBA is possible, anything is.





NINTENDO REVEALS ITS LATEST POKÉMON MONEY-SPINNER

NO GAME, JUST WATCH

With no more *Pokémon* titles in the pipeline for the Game Boy Advance (*Leaf Green* and *Fire Red* aside), Nintendo has struck upon an ingenious idea to wring even more money out of its popular franchise.

As of 21 June, American Pokémon fans will be able to buy Video Paks that will each contain two episodes from the popular Pokémon cartoon (now in its sixth series and still going strong).

The paks will be able to store 45 minutes of animation and are being hailed by Nintendo of America's George Harrison as a "landmark event". "Pokémon is part of the first step in revolutionising the nature of portable video entertainment," Harrison said.

This isn't the first appearance of GBA Video Paks, as Majesco has been using the system for some time. However, Nintendo's move into the market will no doubt make third parties sit up and take notice of this new potential. After all, with 300 episodes to spread over 150 Video Paks (and at $20 a pop), Nintendo is going to be laughing all the way to the bank.

Data stream

BITE-SIZED STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD OF GAMING



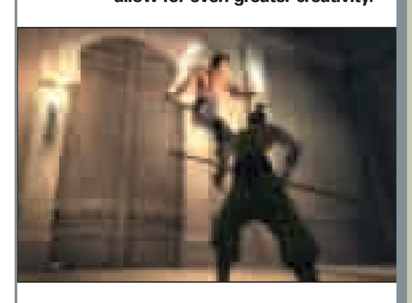
DO THE TRIBAL DANCE

With so many great limited-edition GBA SPs to choose from in Japan, it seems strange that Nintendo's next release here is the Tribal SP. The machine is silver with some tribal-style tattoos. "The tattoo pattern on the console looks pretty cool," blurted celebrity tattoo artist Mister Cartoon. "Tattoos are huge at the moment – everyone wants one. I think the console… will be a huge success with the more individual gamer." We're not sure we share Mr Cartoon's enthusiasm, though we do admire Nintendo's latest marketing strategy. The PSone became a hit by appearing 'cool', so Nintendo is no doubt trying to do the same.



GO WEST

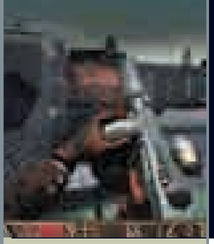
If you're a developer and you fancy a change of scenery, you may want to consider moving to Canada. Thanks to massive success over the last few years, Ubisoft's Montreal Studio is planning to expand its current team of 600 staff and is hoping to add up to 200 new members. Although the likes of *Splinter Cell* and *Prince Of Persia* have met with great success, more original titles like *Beyond Good & Evil* and *XIII* have not fared so well. Hopefully this influx of staff will allow for even greater creativity.

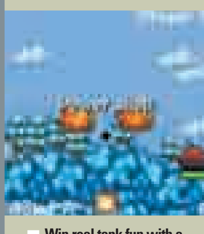


Mobile game of the month

ASHEN

For all its side-talking, battery-removing nonsense, the N-Gage is beginning to prove its worth in the gaming department. With a couple of decent titles on the shelves and plenty of exciting prospects on the horizon, *Ashen* could be the start of the turnaround that forces humble pie into gaming mouths. A solid first-person shooter with online and Bluetooth modes as well as a lengthy single-player campaign, only *Ashen*'s slightly shaky frame rate and fiddly controls detract from the fun. But then this is a mobile game…





Win real tank fun with a bit of mobile tank gaming.

LESS TALK, MORE GAMES

THE PREDICTED MOBILE GAMING BOOM APPEARS TO HAVE BEGUN

While analysts have been predicting great things for mobile gaming for some time , the figures are now starting to speak for themselves. Leading mobile game specialist GameLoft has announced an almost 250 per cent rise in revenue for the first quarter of this year. The firm pulled in over €4 million in the three-month period, vindicating the pundits who have been predicting such a boom for some time.

This is a trend that is only likely to continue and as the market is flooded with more powerful handsets, both the quality of software and demand for it are likely to skyrocket.

In similarly encouraging news, many of the new Siemens mobiles will come pre-loaded with a selection of the latest elkware titles out of the box. The German java giant will be providing traditional games such as *Bubble Boost* and *Contest Arena* as well as a few more ingenious titles.

Photo Pet is one such game – effectively taking the Tamagotchi principle a step further, it offers players the chance to feed their creations with any meal they can capture with the C65's built-in camera. A quirky idea, perhaps, but it's this kind of innovation that could possibly bring the punters flocking to mobile gaming in obscene numbers.

MAN THE CANNONS

O2 JOINS THE ONLINE MOBILE OFFENSIVE

Hot off the back of the announcement of its shiny new X2 handset, O2 is releasing its first venture into network gaming. A £5 download sets players up for some military carnage in *Cannons Tournament*, which takes the form of an online variant of *Tanks*. Up to four players can take part in each game, with the novel twist that the network can randomly select opponents for you if your friends are offline.

The game offers participants the chance to compete against tanks around the country for pride, honour and even some real prizes. The overall tournament victor each month wins a day driving a real tank (and can take a friend along too). While we've never experienced caterpillar-track fun ourselves, we imagine there's more to it than fiddling the 4 and 6 buttons and getting a text message half way through…

Normal WAP charges apply to any time spent online with the game – a dangerous prospect with such an addictive title – so start at your own risk. We wouldn't be at all surprised to see this being just the tip of the iceberg, and as more online games become available network tariffs are likely to undergo a few changes to meet demand. In the meantime, however, *Cannons Tournament* is as good a place as any to start.



"ATARI DID NOT DESIGN VIOLENT GAMES. WE ACTUALLY HAD A RULE THAT SAID YOU COULD BLOW UP A TANK OR A CAR, BUT YOU COULDN'T SHOOT A PERSON"

NOLAN BUSHNELL, CEO, UWINK

UWINK

NOLAN BUSHNELL

Nolan Bushnell's story has been told many times, not because it culminates in a snappy punchline but because the legacy he left behind at Atari lends his tale a certain gravitas – it was Atari's 1972 title *Pong* that provided the first spark for the gaming revolution. With arcade manufacturers showing little interest when Atari founder Bushnell and his VP of engineering, Al Alcorn, finished making *Pong*, the duo decided to set it up themselves in a small California bar. The next day, Alcorn received a frantic phone call asking him to repair the coin slot, which was overflowing – the success of *Pong* was swift and immediate. Little wonder Bushnell describes the early days of Atari as chaos. "That was a time when I was young and dumb," he remembers. "I was trying to figure out how to build and run a company. I was trying to do everything at once, all with very little experience. We knew that what we had was very important technology. There was also a growing market at that time. What we had were lists of games that we wanted to do, but at that time the technology wouldn't allow us to create them."

Although technology hindered Bushnell's vision (*Pong* was a secondary idea to the driving game he wanted), he knew what made them successful. "They were all very well tensioned," he explains. "What that means is that there was a good balance between the risk that you took to lose a life or a game piece with the score that you got. All the best games had an excellent balance between risk and reward."

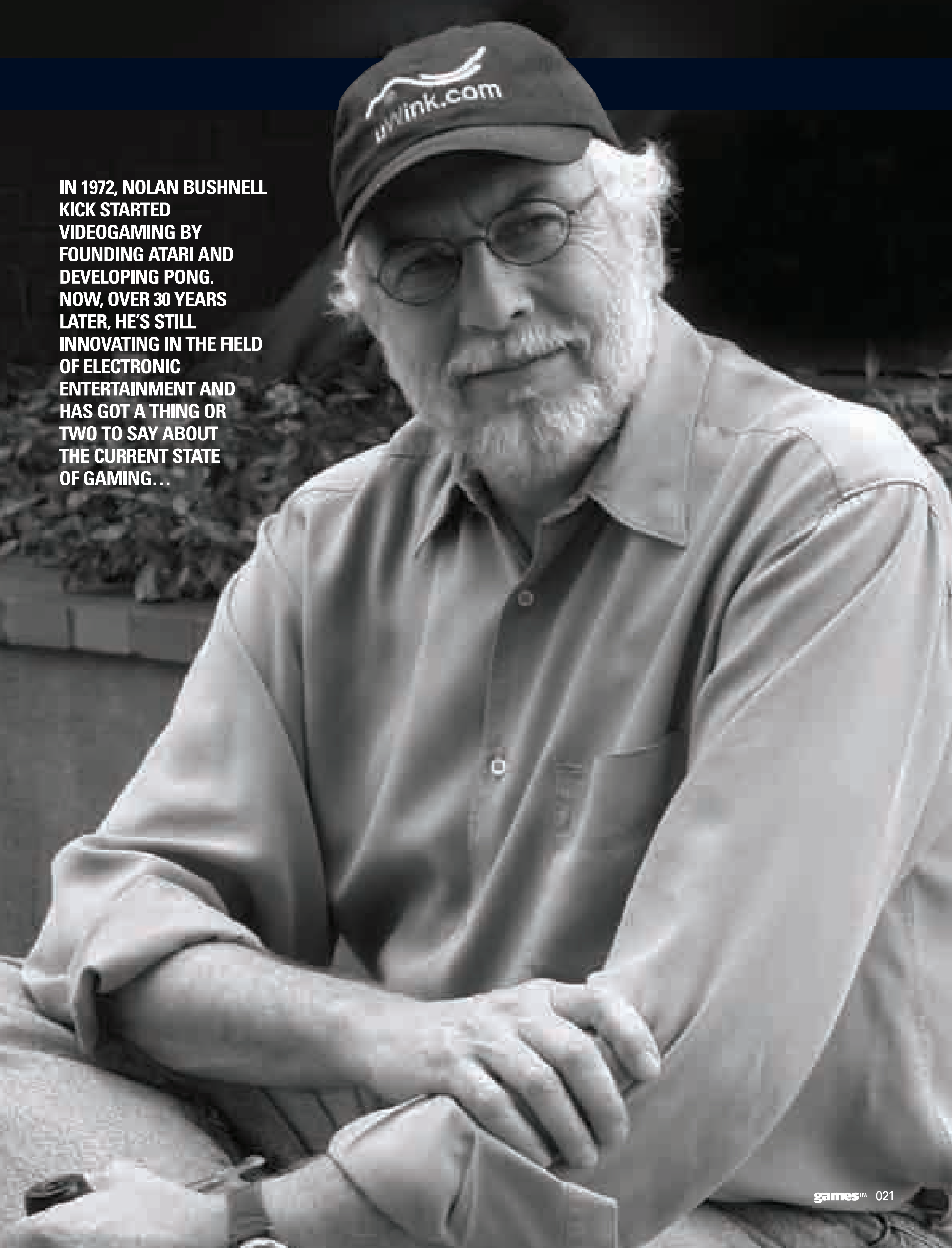
Since selling Atari in 1976, Bushnell has kept gaming at a tactful distance, concentrating instead on ventures such as the Chuck E. Cheese Pizza Time restaurants (which combined pizza parlours with arcade gaming) and a Video Music project that plugged into your television and played images depending on the keys you pressed. Ironically, both projects were deemed failures even though the music software available for consoles today and the convergence of modern arcades suggest Bushnell was ahead of his time.

Bushnell finds it hard to wax lyrical about contemporary games, pointing to the lack of innovation as a reason for his indifference. "I think that games now look pretty much the same," he laments. "True innovation is diminishing. The only way that games developers have been able to differentiate themselves from one another is to slap a licence on what is really the same game. It is interesting from a marketing perspective, but I think it's really boring from a game and innovation perspective." He even struggles to think of a game that truly impressed him in the last year. "There have been some well-executed games," he says. "I have always been a fan of the *Sims* games, and *WarCraft* and *Halo*. But they are basically refinements of things that were done 15 years ago."

One significant recent industry development has been the expansion of online gaming, which is even threatening to usurp modes designed for lone gamers. Yet Bushnell feels that the development of online games will complement rather than replace single-player titles. "I think that games are basically multi-formed," he explains. "There will be solitaire games for the rest of existence, there will also always be good puzzle games that you just want to play alone. But of course there will be other games which require you to play against people. Different types of games will still be out there, it will be your choice which you play and when."

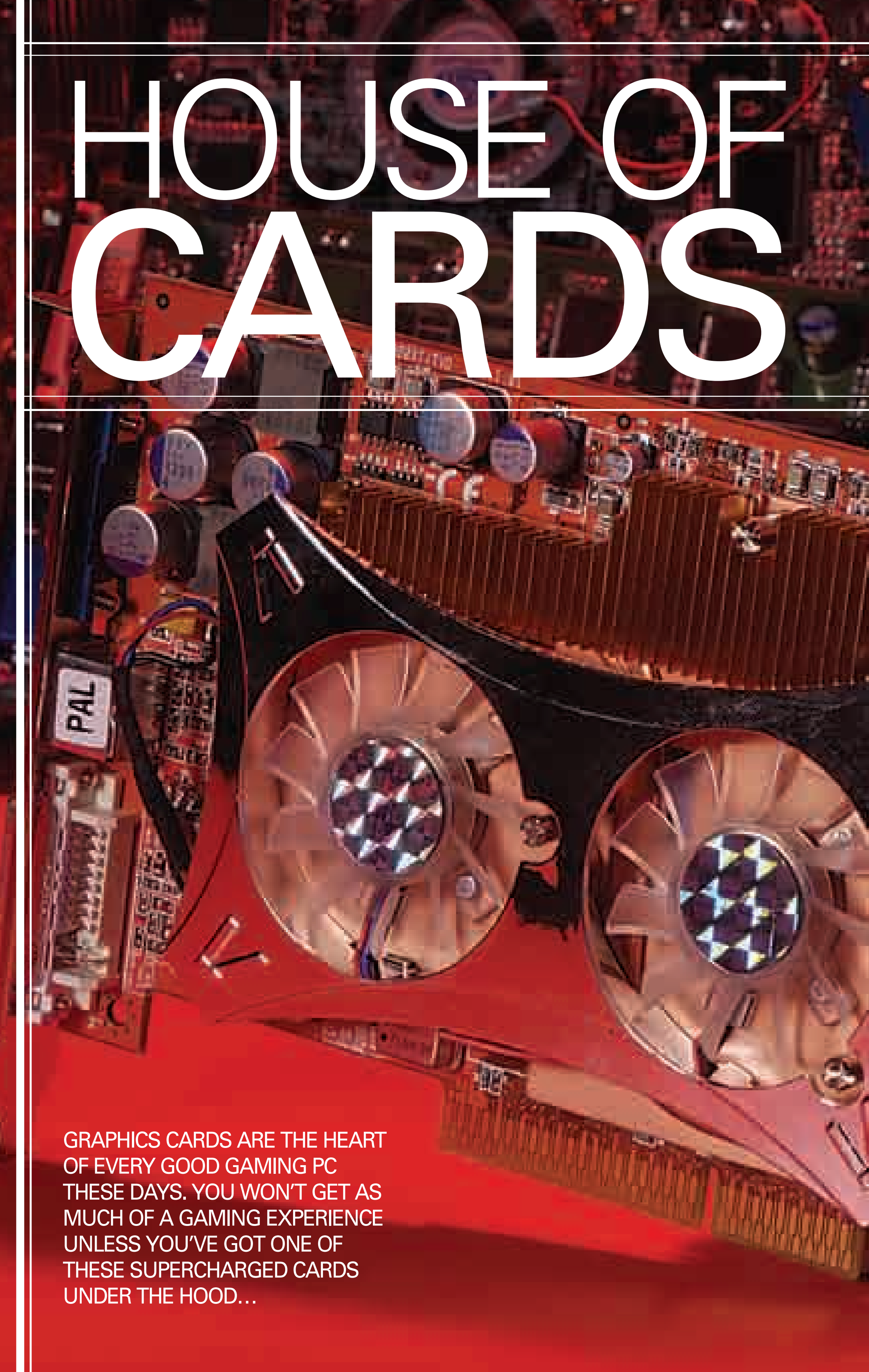
These days, Bushnell heads uWink, a company specialising in entertainment technology. At the moment, he's moving towards touch-screen games, and Bushnell still has big plans for the firm he founded in 1999. "We currently have the Snap! terminal that is shipping worldwide, including the UK," he explains, talking about uWink's new counter-top pub machine containing 58 games. "We also have a new product called Bear Express, which is an animated entertainment system that also vends you a customised bear that you just designed." Intriguing…

Some 32 years after *Pong* exploded onto the scene, time hasn't diluted Bushnell's enthusiasm for technology, nor his drive for innovation, which bodes well for touch-screen games. If a tiny Californian bar is anything to go by, pub landlords should reinforce the coin slots and have Bushnell's number on speed-dial, just in case…



IN 1972, NOLAN BUSHNELL KICK STARTED VIDEOGAMING BY FOUNDING ATARI AND DEVELOPING PONG. NOW, OVER 30 YEARS LATER, HE'S STILL INNOVATING IN THE FIELD OF ELECTRONIC ENTERTAINMENT AND HAS GOT A THING OR TWO TO SAY ABOUT THE CURRENT STATE OF GAMING…

HOUSE OF CARDS



GRAPHICS CARDS ARE THE HEART OF EVERY GOOD GAMING PC THESE DAYS. YOU WON'T GET AS MUCH OF A GAMING EXPERIENCE UNLESS YOU'VE GOT ONE OF THESE SUPERCHARGED CARDS UNDER THE HOOD…

It's hard to believe now, but PCs were once laughed at for their poor gaming and graphical abilities. While console gamers were enjoying colourful, action-packed shoot-'em-ups, the PC was always seen as a business machine that could also play a few flight sims or strategy titles. Of course, our trusty beige boxes are now home to some of the best games ever made, but this change all comes down to the increase in power that today's graphics cards offer.

Humble Beginnings

The big transition came when the first 3D cards were introduced, at the same time that the first 32- and 64-bit consoles were introducing gamers to the concept of 'proper' 3D graphics outside the arcade. The earliest commonly available examples were the Voodoo from 3DLabs and its short-lived rival, the PowerVR. The Voodoo was an incredibly powerful accelerator board that enabled developers to do all sorts of tricks for the first time. Soon after the release of the Voodoo, ATi introduced the first of its Rage cards while Nvidia had its Riva 128. Although both are major players now, 3DLabs was the original market leader.

The Race Is On

It didn't take long for other companies to catch up with 3DLabs. Nvidia made a huge impact with the TNT2 and GeForce series. The GeForce 256 and GTS were cheaper and more powerful than the long-delayed Voodoo 4 and 5, and Nvidia became the official supplier for Apple computers. ATi struggled along with various incarnations of the Rage, but it fared better than 3DLabs, which was tearing itself apart with internal disputes, poor sales and long delays on new hardware. 3Dlabs closed down not long after Voodoo 5 was released, although, having become part of Creative Labs, it has now found success producing high-end products for the professional CAD and CGI markets.

Of course, the fact that there are now just two brands of graphics card (Nvidia and ATi) can only be good news for consumers; the fierce competition means prices are relatively low. Both boast a range of cards to suit budget, mid-range and high-end use, so the only thing limiting how high you set your sights is how big your wallet is.

TRIED AND TESTED

SPARKLE 5900XT

BEST FOR VALUE

- RRP: £150
- Online Price: approx. £119
- Supplier: Sparkle
- Web: www.sparkle-technology.co.uk

Despite being relatively cheap, the Sparkle 5900XT is often able to match pricier cards in terms of speed. It has a core clock speed of 390Mhz and a memory frequency of 680Mhz, with a 256-bit memory interface. The 5099XT also has the standard Nvidia CineFX and Intellisample features for pixel shading and anti-aliasing. The card comes with little in the way of extras, but this is offset by the price.

The overall test scores for the Sparkle 5900XT were very good, and it performed very well considering its slower memory speed. General image quality was also excellent, especially with the Windows desktop. It's also worth mentioning the overclocking potential of the 5900XT series. Although we haven't included overclocking in our benchmarks, the 5900XT gives excellent results when you take it past the default clock frequencies. Of course, overclocking isn't for everyone, but the 5900XT performs well enough out of the box. And at this price it's hard to argue with…

Sparkle costs around £150, which is what many of its resellers will charge, but Pricerunner.co.uk has sites selling it for as low as £120. A low cost and high performance make the Sparkle 5900XT an excellent choice for mid-range graphics processing, and the overclocking potential makes it an attractive purchase for gamers.

"THE SPARKLE 5900XT IS OFTEN ABLE TO MATCH PRICIER CARDS IN TERMS OF SPEED"

"OUR TEST SHOWS THAT THE 9800XT IS ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL CONSUMER GRAPHICS CARDS"

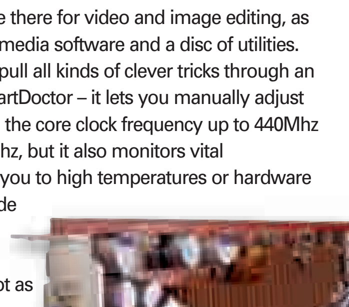
ASUS 9800XT/TVD



- RRP: £323
- Online Price: approx. £320
- Supplier: Asus
- Web: www.asus.com

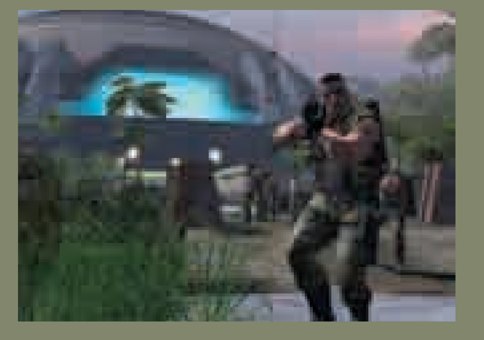
The specification of the 9800XT is similar to an Nvidia 5950 Ultra, with 256Mb DDR RAM, 412Mhz core clock and 730Mhz memory, with the RAMDAC at 400MHz. Where the 9800XT differs, however, is that it has eight pixel pipelines instead of the 5950 Ultra's four, with one texture unit per pipeline. The 9800XT also has ATi's own pixel- and vertex-shader technology with SmartShader 2.1, while SmoothVision 2.1 gives anti-aliasing and anisotropic filtering.

There's a good set of extras that make this worth buying over other 9800XT packages: as well as a voucher for *Half-Life 2*, there are two games and a demo disc. Ulead Cool 3D 2.0 and Photo Express are there for video and image editing, as well as a DVD player, media software and a disc of utilities. The 9800XT/TVD can pull all kinds of clever tricks through an application called SmartDoctor – it lets you manually adjust overclocking, pushing the core clock frequency up to 440Mhz and memory to 770Mhz, but it also monitors vital components, alerting you to high temperatures or hardware failures. Asus has made overclocking a possibility even for novices, though it's not as if this card needs it.

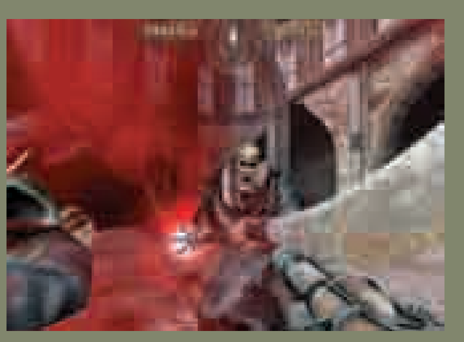


Our test showed that the 9800XT is one of the most powerful consumer graphics cards, and the extras and SmartDoctor make this worth getting.

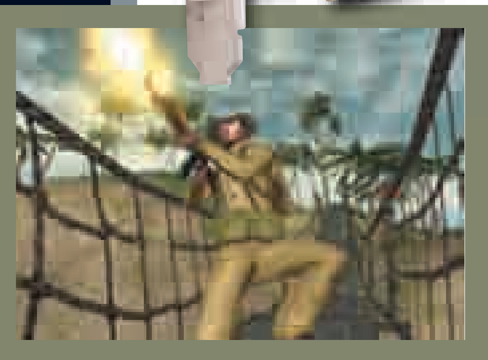
HEY, GOOD LOOKING THE GAMES THAT WILL PUSH YOUR PC TO THE LIMIT



God bless Crytek for delivering on almost all the promises it made for *Far Cry*. From stunning water and jungle effects to a draw distance that goes on for miles, it's set a precedent for other PC titles to follow.

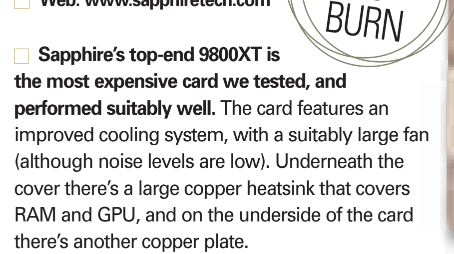


Painkiller's over-the-top gameplay provides more than enough heart-pounding moments, but People Can Fly has created a real graphical wonder too – something that needs to be seen on a high-spec PC to be believed.



Recreating the verdant jungles of Vietnam within the confines of a videogame isn't easy, but *Battlefield Vietnam* pulls it off – although to truly appreciate the scenery, you need the resolution turned right up to the top.

SAPPHIRE ATLANTIS 9800XT



- RRP: £329
- Online Price: approx. £329
- Supplier: Sapphire
- Web: www.sapphiretech.com

MONEY TO BURN

Sapphire's top-end 9800XT is the most expensive card we tested, and performed suitably well. The card features an improved cooling system, with a suitably large fan (although noise levels are low). Underneath the cover there's a large copper heatsink that covers RAM and GPU, and on the underside of the card there's another copper plate.

The specifications are standard with 412Mhz core clock and 365Mhz memory (730Mhz DDR), and while Sapphire hasn't shipped the 9800XT overclocked it has used higher-quality RAM that will give you more room for overclocking later on. It's rated at 400Mhz so there's the potential for squeezing additional power out of it.

Our test showed the Atlantis 9800XT was up there with the rest of the 9800XT cards, except on *Halo*, where it was a few points behind the others. This isn't a problem now, as it was just a few frames per second, but it is worrying that it may have some difficulty with DirectX 9 in the future. It did handle *Far Cry* very well, though, and the image quality, as with the other 9800XTs, was excellent. If our group test proved one thing, it's that the high-end ATi cards produce the most detailed, sharp and colourful visuals, whether in-game or just on the Windows desktop.

With all the 9800XT cards coming in with similar scores and costing roughly the same, we have to look at the details of each card in order to recommend one over the other. The Atlantis 9800XT is a powerful card that will keep gamers going well into next year, so it's a close call between this and the Asus 9800XT/TVD.

"THE ATLANTIS 9800XT IS A POWERFUL GRAPHICS CARD THAT WILL KEEP GAMERS GOING INTO NEXT YEAR"

ASUS V9980



- RRP: £334
- Online Price: approx. £318
- Supplier: Asus
- Web: www.asus.com

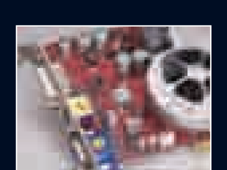
The Asus V9980 is a top-of-the-range Nvidia GeForce FX 5950 Ultra, with 256Mb DDR RAM and AGP 8x, it's also fully DirectX 9 compatible. The RAMDAC is rated at 400Mhz, while the system clock comes in at 475Mhz and the memory runs at 950Mhz (475Mhz DDR), which surpasses the top-rated ATi equivalent, the 9800XT. The combination of high-speed GPU and memory, coupled with an 8x AGP bus means the 5950Ultra can handle a maximum memory bandwidth of 30.4Gb a second and the texture fill rate peaks out at 30.8 Gigatexels. It also contains advanced features such as CineFx 2.0 and Intellisample technology. This card boasts a customised copper heatsink and dual-fan unit, which not only reduces the size but makes it quieter too. Asus has also thrown in a top bundle of extras, including three full games, a Video In/Out adapter and a variety of utilities. Because of the hefty specifications, you'd expect the V9980 to perform exceptionally well, but somehow it didn't manage to stand out when tested with the 9800XT cards. The Windows desktop was sharp and defined, while in-game graphics were impressive, but the test showed that the V9980 was only just level with the 9800XT, and, in some cases, seemed to lag behind. This performance gap will be more visible as games get more complex, which is a worry if you want to enjoy *Doom 3* and *Half-Life 2*…

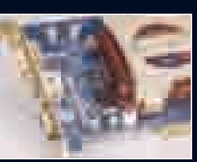


"THE V9980 WAS ONLY JUST LEVEL WITH THE 9800XT, AND IN SOME CASES IT SEEMED TO LAG BEHIND"

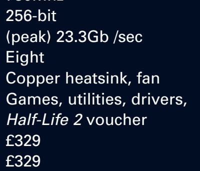
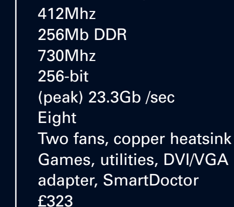
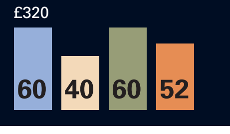
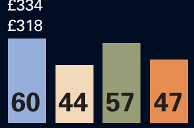
APPROACH THE BENCHMARK THOSE TEST STATS IN FULL

We tested our cards with a few graphics-hungry games. *Max Payne 2*, *Call Of Duty*, *Halo* and *Far Cry* put the kit through its paces, and the excellent FRAPS utility (www.fraps.com) measured the average frames per second. All games were run at a resolution of 1280 x1024 with full detail. *Call Of Duty* had Vsync enabled, capping the fps at 60, so that we could check the visual quality. *Halo* uses DirectX 9, so we were able to judge a card's ability to handle DX9 effects. *Max Payne 2* has some incredibly detailed textures, while *Far Cry*'s lush effects and draw distance marked out the high-end cards.





Name:	Sparkle 5900XT	Sapphire Atlantis 9800XT	ASUS 9800XT/TVD	ASUS V9980
Core clock:	390Mhz	412Mhz	412Mhz	475Mhz
Memory:	128Mb DDR	256Mb DDR	256Mb DDR	256Mb DDR
Memory speed:	680Mhz	730Mhz	730Mhz	950Mhz
Memory interface:	256-bit	256-bit	256-bit	256-bit
Memory bandwidth:	(peak) 9.6Gb /sec	(peak) 23.3Gb /sec	(peak) 23.3Gb /sec	(peak) 30.4Gb /sec
Pixel pipelines:	Four	Eight	Eight	Four
Cooling:	Heatsink, fan	Copper heatsink, fan	Two fans, copper heatsink	Two fans, copper heatsink
Package:	Games, utilities, DVI adapter, SmartDoctor	Games, utilities, drivers, *Half-Life 2* voucher	Games, utilities, DVI/VGA adapter, SmartDoctor	Games, utilities, DVI/VGA adapter, TV-out cable
RRP:	£150	£329	£323	£334
Online Price:	£119	£329	£320	£318
fps test results:				
Call Of Duty demo	58	60	60	60
Halo demo	31	39	40	44
Max Payne 2 demo	53	60	60	57
Far Cry demo	39	53	52	47

AND MOVING ON...

THE WORLD OF PC TECHNOLOGY NEVER STANDS STILL, SO IT'S NOT SURPRISING THAT THE TWO BIGGEST COMPANIES ALREADY HAVE ACES UP THEIR SLEEVES

NVIDIA

THE INDUSTRY FAVOURITE MAKES NEW FRIENDS

For Nvidia it's business as usual for the foreseeable future – advancing the power of its graphics technology and chipping away at the market share of its rivals. The latest step towards this comes in the form of Nvidia's new GeForce 6 series, which has been designed with industry-leading 3D performance in mind. Delivering twice the power of the current processor and becoming the only GPU available to support Pixel Shader 3.0, GeForce 6 has already got its sights on being the choice of the entire PC development industry.

The announcement of the new chipset was welcomed by a huge number of leading developers. John Carmack of id Software and Tim Sweeney of Epic Games, the men behind two of the biggest FPS franchises on the PC today, said that Nvidia's new NV40 technology would become their development platform of choice, while almost every other PC developer (from LucasArts and Crytek to Sony Online and Ion Storm), not to mention firms like Adobe, had nothing but praise for the chipset.



Nvidia's GeForce chipsets have seen the firm rise to the forefront of 3D grapics development.

"By providing a hardware platform designed to enable movie-quality graphics in a real-time, interactive, 3D environment, the Nvidia GeForce 6 series comes at a pivotal time in the games industry when game creators are looking for new, more efficient ways to advance their craft," said Mark Daly, vice president of content development at Nvidia. "For game creators, the GeForce 6 series delivers a dramatic leap in production quality by encouraging the use of the latest software advancements, such as Shader Model 3.0. The result will be stunning-looking games that can be experienced on consumer PCs, pixel for pixel, just the way the creator intended."

ATI

THE FIRM THAT'S CORNERED THE CONSOLE MARKET

Meanwhile, over at ATi, advances of a different nature are surfacing. Naturally, the company's progress in PC graphics technology is continuing apace, although at the time of going to press it has yet to announce the likely rival to Nvidia's GeForce 6. Instead, ATi is making in-roads into the realm of console development and, more specifically, providing the backbone for the future generation of hardware for not just one, but two console manufacturers.

The rather unsurprising news is the continuation of ATi's relationship with Nintendo – having already provided the GameCube with its high-spec graphics processor (codenamed Flipper), an announcement in March confirmed a major agreement between the two firms concerning 'technologies for use in Nintendo products'. No other details of the agreement have been released yet, although rumours are already flying about the successors to not only the GameCube, but the Game Boy Advance as well.

However, the real coup comes from ATi picking up the pieces left behind after the falling out between Microsoft and Nvidia. The result? ATi is now officially providing the graphical chipsets for 'future Xbox products and services', which all but points to the next iteration of the Xbox due, according to Microsoft, in 2005.

"We're combining Microsoft's vision, software experience and R&D resources with ATI's pioneering leadership in graphics technologies to create innovative future Xbox products and services that meet the lifestyle needs of consumers in the digital decade," said Robbie Bach, senior vice president of the home and entertainment division at Microsoft. "We selected ATI after reviewing the top graphics technologies in development and determining that ATI's technical vision fits perfectly with the future direction of Xbox."

JARGON BUSTER

THOSE COMPLEX TERMS IN PLAIN ENGLISH

AGP

Short for accelerated graphics port. AGP is designed especially for the throughput demands of 3D graphics. Rather than using the PCI (peripheral component interconnect) bus for graphics data, AGP introduces a dedicated point-to-point channel so that the graphics controller can directly access main memory.

ALIASING

In computer graphics, the process by which smooth curves and other lines become jagged because the resolution of the graphics device or file is not high enough to represent a smooth curve. Anti-aliasing techniques can reduce the effect of aliasing.

CLOCK SPEED

The speed at which a microprocessor executes instructions. Every computer contains an internal clock that regulates the rate at which instructions are executed and synchronises all the computer components. The CPU needs a fixed number of clock ticks (or clock cycles) to carry out each instruction. The faster the clock, the more instructions the CPU can execute per second. Clock speeds are expressed in megahertz (MHz) or gigahertz (GHz).

MEMORY

Internal storage areas in the computer. The term 'memory' identifies data storage that comes in the form of chips, while 'storage' is used for memory that exists on tapes or disks. 'Memory' is usually used as shorthand for physical memory, which refers to the chips that hold data.

OVERCLOCKING

To run a microprocessor faster than the speed for which it has been tested and approved. This is a popular technique for eking out more performance from a system. In many cases, you can force your CPU to run faster than it was intended simply by setting a jumper (a circuit bridge) on the motherboard. Overclocking does come with risks, such as over-heating, so you should become familiar with all the pros and cons before you try it.

LETTER FROM AMERICA

WITH YOUR FRIENDLY EX-PATRIOT, THE SHAPE

"THIS NEW SHOW REVOLVED AROUND THE IDEA THAT WHEN WE STOP GO BACK TO THEIR COMPLICATED HOME LIVES WITH, YOU



See? This is the kind of computer-generated hilarity we want. Isn't it?

As you most likely know, I reside in a nation run by a beady-eyed warmonger who lives in the pocket of our Saudi enemies and still says 'nookyoolar' in place of nuclear, much in the way a child does. Understandably, I take a measure of flack for this from… ooh, just about everyone I know who doesn't live here. I deflect this perfectly justified ribbing, if only in my own mind, with a wall built from small luxuries only afforded me by my very location within the United States: The International House of Pancakes, leafblowers, cheerleaders (one dreams of combining all three) and a thousand other teeny weeny compensations.

I thought another was on the way in March, one of these perks that would make my derisive UK friends jealous – a videogame-based sitcom. The concept was fresh and exciting: pushing the idea that all games characters live in an existing world, the show revolved around the fantasy that when we switch off these characters go back to their full, complicated home lives with, you know, hilarious consequences. The CG animated show, called *Game Over*, was not made by a soulless media subsidiary but by a small group of young TV professionals who were nuts about gaming. Known as Moorpark Productions, the VG-savvy team behind *Game Over* included writers and other talent from legitimate series like *3rd Rock From The Sun*, *That 70's Show* and some you won't have heard of. There are tales of them rigging the production suite for 16-player system-link *Halo* and playing into the morning. Our kind of people.

The cast included Lucy Liu – ingenious for capturing your hardcore-gaming-obsessive-otaku-megageek audience – as the voice of mom/*Alias*-style secret super agent Raquel. Funny girl Rachel Dratch, dependably amusing on NBC's wilting *Saturday Night Live*, voiced daughter Alice. Some good decisions had obviously been made, and the backing was in place; *Game Over* aired on UPN, not a marginal digital cable channel up in the 200s that nobody sees, but a full-blooded network, the same channel on which viewers depended for shows like *Eve* and *Enterprise*. It was all set. History was about to be made. A niche exploded. Sides split. *Game Over* had only one problem: it was rubbish.

For no obvious reason – though likely due to the meddling of its corporate client, notorious mainstream shit factory Carsey-Werner-Mandabach – Moorpark sold out, softened the show too much, and delivered a tepid product that appealed neither to the hardcore gamer nor the standard nookyoolar family. Over here, that's called fumbling the ball. It was thrown a great pass (the opportunity to trailblaze in an industry out of good ideas, the prospect of mining the rich, untapped history of videogames for years' worth of original material) and it botched the catch (turned in a cheesy, middle-of-the-road snooze assist).

The inside references were there, it's true. In the pilot episode, the family drives into the wilderness to dump a bizarre pet they



PLAYING A GAME THE CHARACTERS KNOW, HILARIOUS CONSEQUENCES"

cannot care for; among the menagerie of abandoned creatures are a Scrab and a Paramite from the *Oddworld* universe, trying like hell to devour the latest addition to their pet purgatory. Crash Bandicoot has his own marsupial version of the famous 'Got Milk?' billboards. The son Billy (the Bart of the piece) sizes up a busy intersection he must cross in another episode, meeting Frogger on the curb. But the humour was just too light, the appeal defocused to welcome happy, prime-time families eating dinner in front of the box. The rest of us, we've seen *Family Guy* for heaven's sake. We need a little more edge than the comical discomfort dad feels when taking daughter Alice to buy her first (tee hee!) bra. I should have known from the beginning not to expect much. In the frequent trailers run by UPN, it was made clear that the family's surname was, ahem, Smashenburn. Doesn't that just suck harder than a Dyson? A jokey surname. Bad sign. Silly me.

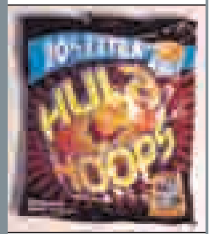
No matter, though: in but five episodes, it was game over for *Game Over*, as the network struck with its big red cancellation pen. Not that this is any indication of a show's quality, you understand. Every original series I've ever liked here except *Scrubs* has been cancelled; gems like *Andy Richter Controls The Universe*, which lasted a season and a half, the charming *Wonderfalls*, even *Futurama*. But the ratings spoke and the Smashenburns need to live with it just as I do. With cheap liquor.

Many thanks



MISS ABOUT BRITAIN…

Hula Hoops

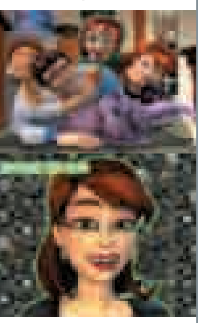


LOVE ABOUT AMERICA…

Hummers



It sounded good, it looked okay, it, er, bombed.

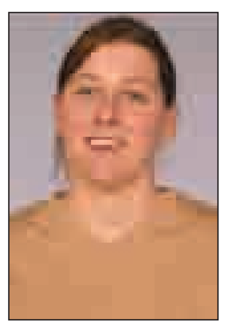


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AMERIKAAN

PRODUCTS, PLACES, SERVICES AND EVENTS FROM THE LAND OF THE FREE

THE SWAN





Plastic surgery-based reality TV is 'the thing' right now, with this being the best show of all. Sixteen ugly ducklings opt for every procedure possible – implants, veneers, brow lifts, tucks – and go on to compete against each other in a ghoulish beauty pageant.

US MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	NBA Ballers	Midway	Multi
2	Resident Evil: Outbreak	Capcom	PS2
3	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Multi
4	Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	Multi
5	All-Star Baseball 2005	Acclaim	Multi
6	Fight Night 2004	EA Sports	Multi
7	Rise To Honour	SCEA	PS2
8	Mafia	Vivendi	Multi
9	007: Everything Or Nothing	EA	Multi
10	Ghost Recon: Jungle Storm	Ubisoft	Multi

(Updated 23/4/04)


NBA Ballers

Resident Evil: Outbreak

games™ JAPAN REPORT

KONGETSU*

WITH JAPANESE CORRESPONDENT TIM ROGERS

"JAPANESE BIKE GANGS RIDE DIRTBIKES INSTEAD OF HARLEYS. ENGINES AT NIGHT, WHILE HELPING OLD LADIES ACROSS

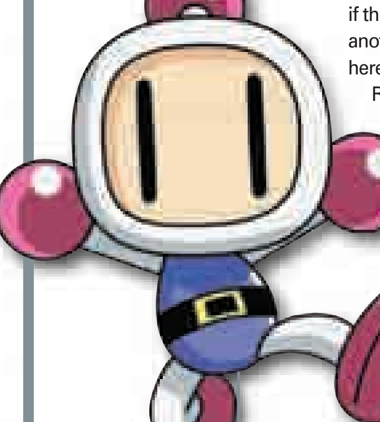
My favourite game store in the world is Rom House in Shiki. I don't know what else I can say about it – it's long, wide and occupies the first floor of a building beneath an all-night internet café. The floor is made of wood, so a sound like footsteps in a movie echoes with every step you take. It makes you feel like you're in some place important, even if they're always playing some song by Ayumi Hamasaki, or else another one of those pop stars on the Avex Trax label (around here, we refer to these people as 'Avex Mutations').

Rom House is very dear to me. I used to be homeless in Saitama and I somehow ended up in Shiki, where I fell in with a bike gang. A Japanese bike gang, by the way, rides dirtbikes instead of Harleys and they also, rather suspiciously, don't kill anyone. They just rev up their engines at night, while helping old ladies across the street during the day. I met these kids in the street one day and started hanging with them, going to punk-rock shows and videogame shopping with them. One of the gang members' friends worked at Rom House in Shiki; this friend of his would hang out with us at the internet café – the Gera-Gera, it was called – at night, after Rom House closed. At the Gera-Gera we'd play *Bomberman* on PlayStation, with the occasional round of *Goemon 5*, as well as talk about music, or girls, or anything outside the realm of videogames.

I'd first seen this Rom House guy a week before I met my gang friends – he was talking with his friend at the counter of the store about motorcycle parts. I was listening from behind a rack of Saturn games – six heads taller than me, no less – while thinking, fascinated, that all of the other Japanese game stores I'd known, mostly in the jungle of Akihabara, were staffed by frosted-haired college kids who never talked to one another. You bring up a raw Mega Drive cartridge of *Gaiares* and they'd nod at you, put the game in a paper bag, fold the top, tape it, put it in a plastic bag, fold it over, tape it and then hand it back to you. When you pay, you put your money on a plastic tray, which the cashier then handles until the money is in the register. He puts your change back in the plastic tray. You then leave, and the cashiers go silent again.

When I used to work at a videogame store in America, I talked with customers about videogames all the time; it was my job, actually, just to talk. I didn't have to operate a register or anything, I just talked about videogames. They'd never have someone like that at a Japanese game store.

It makes you wonder, buying those games and getting them wrapped the same way as the porn shop down the street wraps a porn DVD – do people talk about games here, when there's



Japanese bikers find *Bomberman* more enjoyable than, say, arson.



THEY JUST REV UP THEIR THE ROAD DURING THE DAY"

something else they could be doing? If not, why not? I sometimes see girls at the counters of game stores in Akihabara, girls I'd like to talk to if I had any money to buy games. Even if I did have money to buy the games, would the girls even talk to me? What would we talk about?

I went back up to Shiki Rom House today with my guitarist, Drew Cosner. We went in and admired its eight under-glass copies of *Radiant Silvergun* (the yardstick of a game store's worth in this country) and its wall of long-lost peripherals like the Bandai WonderSwan WonderWitch Player. I'd pointed up at the Rom House sign when we were at the train station and we headed towards it. We waited at a crosswalk behind two Japanese fellows in hip-hopper apparel, and one of them motioned to the store's sign with the tip of his cigarette. "This must be the place," he said. When they stepped inside, ahead of us, and found the PC Engine CD aisle, they turned and looked at each other with open mouths. That's all they needed to say.

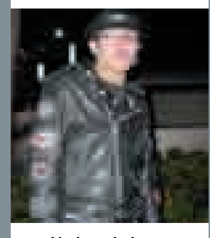
Kind regards



TEACH YOURSELF JAPANESE

LESSON NINETEEN: A SHOPPING OUTRAGE

Koko wa *Reedeiento Shirubaagan* nanmai aruno?	How many copies of *Radiant Silvergun* do you have here?
S-sanmai. Moshiwake arimasen. Nintendo Roku-juu-yon no *Bangaiou* futatsu aru kedo…	Th-three. There is no excuse. We do have two copies of *Bangai-oh* on Nintendo 64, however…
Sanmai dake? Nadarou! Mottainee, koko!	Just three? What the hell? This place is undeserving (of my business)!
N-ne, K-k-kochira no hentai furoaa wa Akihabara no ichiban hiroi dayo!	The-the-the hentai floor here is the biggest in Akihabara, y-you know!
Mottainee! Kono dokodemo kaeru geemu wo SHIKI ROM HOUSE de kai ni ikunjayo!	Enough! I'm going to go buy this game you can buy anywhere else (for the same price) at SHIKI ROM HOUSE!



It's okay – he just wants to talk about games.

POSSIBLY THE BEST GIRL GAMER EVER

Being the loyal and loving readers that you are, you'll no doubt recall that I've said before how Japanese guys these days tend to think *Final Fantasy* is a 'girly' game, and *Dragon Quest* is a 'manly' one. Well, I've got something; here's a little idea of how girly Japanese girls play manly Japanese games…

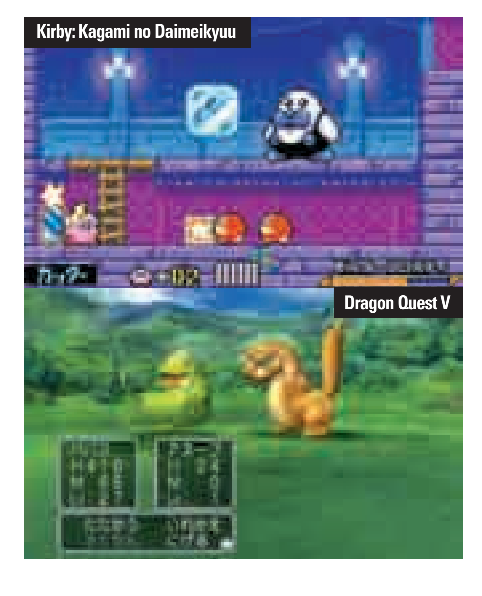
Once, at Shiki Rom House, I saw these two office girls; one was squatted in front of a row of Super Famicom games – all in-box, of course, and shiny like new – and the other was standing behind her with her hands on her knees. "What are you looking for?" asked the standing girl. "*Dragon Quest VI*," said the squatting one. "Don't you already have that one?" asked the standing girl. "Yeah," the other girl said, "I just don't want to delete my other three quests."

My reaction was to want to marry this girl immediately, without any kind of hesitation. However, in a Japanese public situation, it's kind of hard to bring up something like this on the spot. I had to play much *Devil's Crush* on PC Engine afterwards to dispel my feelings of left-behindness. And her friend's reaction? Nothing but an understanding "Oh, I see."

JAPANESE MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Kirby: Kagami no Daimeikyuu	Nintendo	GBA
2	Dragon Quest V	Square-Enix	PS2
3	Crayon Shin-Chan: Arashi wo Yobu Cinema Land no Daiboken!	Banpresto	GBA
4	Famicom Mini: Super Mario Bros	Nintendo	GBA
5	Crimson Sea 2	Koei	PS2
6	Pokémon: Fire Red	Nintendo	GBA
7	Dynasty Warriors 4: Empires	Koei	PS2
8	Nobunaga Ambition: Tenka Sousei	Koei	PS2
9	Pro Baseball Spirits 2004	Konami	PS2
10	Monster Hunter	Capcom	PS2

(Updated 18/4/04 © 2004 Media Create Co. Ltd. All Rights Reserved)



Kirby: Kagami no Daimeikyuu

Dragon Quest V



SPOOKY JAPANESE URBAN MYTHS, PSYCHIC SIBLINGS, CHILDHOOD FEARS AND USING A CAMERA AS YOUR ONLY MEANS OF PROTECTION. AS MAKOTO SHIBATA TELLS US, SURVIVAL HORROR ISN'T JUST ABOUT THE SURVIVAL…



"I ASKED THE QUESTION: WHAT PROVOKES FEAR? THE ANSWER IS QUITE SIMPLE – IT HAS TO BE SOMETHING WE CAN RELATE TO"

MAKOTO SHIBATA, PROJECT ZERO SERIES DIRECTOR, TECMO

MAKOTO SHIBATA

TECMO

When faced with an emergency situation, the human psyche will react in one of two ways – fight or flight. Survival horror games inspire similar feelings in those who play them; when a tooled-up Chris Redfield is confronted with shuffling zombies the automatic response is fight – that accounts for the survival element. But the need to induce flight with horror hasn't escaped *Project Zero* series director Makoto Shibata. "I didn't want lots of weapons, as the idea is not to fight your way out of situations," he explains. "This is probably not something you'd do in real life and our idea is to create an environment that's real and convincing. I chose a camera as the only aid in the game as the player must face their fear in order to survive."

Shibata-san joined Tecmo ten years ago as a planning co-ordinator. Gaining experience directing artwork and sound on various titles, he progressed to director of *Project Zero* and its sequel, *Crimson Butterfly*. "I personally love survival horror games," he enthuses. "It's appealing to gamers, but a game needs a mixture of the right elements for it to work. A survival horror game needs a good plot, great visuals, creepy sounds and spine-chilling music and, of course, the right amount of build-up and surprises to keep the player enticed and on their toes. I like a situation that fuels and teases the imagination and creates unease. Mix that feeling with a sense of space and the unknown and you've got a very scary game. We don't tend to show explicit gore and blood scenes. Of course, there are some elements to add to the excitement and psychological fear."

Finding these elements that create 'excitement and psychological fear' is tough as there's a fine line between shock and horror. Zombie dogs crashing through windows causes shock, but implicit horror doesn't die with a few well-aimed shotgun blasts. "Before *Project Zero* was in development, I asked the question: what provokes fear?" Shibata-san says. "The answer is quite simple – it has to be something we can relate to. I find Japanese, haunting urban myths and legends really spooky. Childhood fears are another. We created *Project Zero* in order to bring these unsettling thoughts alive. I wanted to express this in a way that is pure and deep."

Project Zero cranked up the tension using these elements, so for its sequel Shibata-san decided to add another character, Mayu. As your weaker sister, Mayu brought the extra responsibility of protecting her, drawing more emotional investment from the player. "Mayu is an essential ingredient to the game," Shibata-san explains. "Although she is very sensitive to the paranormal, she has little resistance to it, and is often used by ghosts as a medium. Mayu is often possessed and starts speaking in someone else's voice, or becomes someone else or just disappears and you're left alone… This adds apprehension and a certain edge to the game."

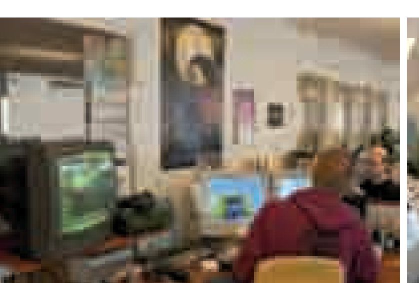
When developers favour implicit horror, there's not much room to push the boundaries before the scare tactics become explicit, and even these titles are in danger of becoming turkey shoots (look at the collapse of the *Dino Crisis* series). So how much further can survival horror go? "There is still potential for survival horror games to evolve," Shibata-san says. "Of course, technological advancement in CG will allow more atmospheric detail, and playability will increase further. It's difficult to say how much further the genre can be taken. Horror is not seen as [being as] big as action or adventure, but I don't want to be pessimistic. I think the difference between horror games and horror films and novels is that in games you control the situation first-hand, and that's the component to build on. I hope that survival horror will not just be considered as a genre in the games category, but will get to be successful over horror films and novels too."

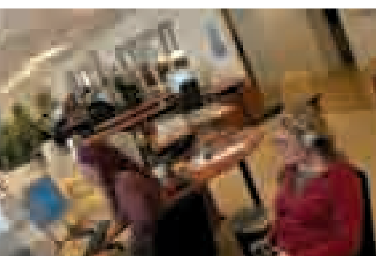
While the question of evolution lingers over survival horror, Shibata-san remains positive and sees his future in the genre, for the short term at least. "I do have other game genres in mind," he says. "But I like the survival horror genre, and I think that survival horror likes me. I'm so closely drawn to it now that I just don't think I could let it down. In ten years time there may be a different demand for games entirely, but I think… psychological horror will live on. Whatever happens and however advanced things become, we'll still jump if we hear a bump in the middle of the night…"

Project Zero II: Crimson Butterfly is out now on PlayStation2 and was reviewed in issue 15.

COMMUNITY

THIS MONTH, **games™** PACKS ITS THERMALS AND HEADS OFF TO SWEDEN TO POKE AROUND INSIDE AMUZE'S STUDIOS





AMUZE

IT'S ONE OF THE LEAST PROLIFIC DEVELOPERS OUT THERE, DESPITE PLENTY OF BACKING FROM SEGA, AN EXCELLENT REPUTATION, AND A WEALTH OF RAW EUROPEAN TALENT. NATURALLY, WE WANTED TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHAT MAKES HEADHUNTER'S AMUZE TICK…

What's in a name? Amuze – is it amuse or amaze? Perhaps the company's title contains some sort of key to the way this Stockholm-based developer operates. Indeed, many people are amazed to hear that the developer responsible for the much-loved *Headhunter* on Dreamcast has been lying almost dormant for the past few years. Founded in 1996, Amuze was one of the first studios to be given Dreamcast development status, and despite SEGA's generosity, it chose to become independent in 2002. Sharing a city with another, more prolific, developer – Digital Illusions – Amuze has gathered its staff carefully from a range of backgrounds, a factor that usually creates a wellspring for quality title after quality title. Speaking to founder John Kroknes and writer/director Philip Lawrence it's clear that they know what makes a good team. "We really look at talent from other industries like advertising, film and TV whenever we see that they can add value and bring a different experience to the games industry," says Kroknes. "A lot of our key people have been trained internally, coming with fresh degrees from various universities a few years ago in areas such as art, design and software engineering. We are good at spotting talent."

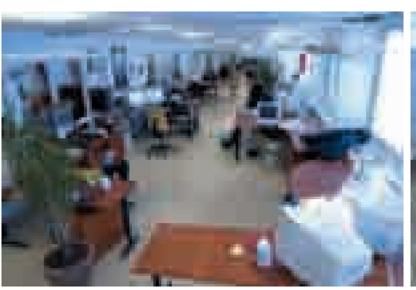
This search for individual flair seems to be occupying the thoughts of many developers recently, as EA has reported its talent-shopping spree for forthcoming remake *GoldenEye 2* and, over in Japan, some of the greatest minds in games development have formed Capcom's new studio, Clover. However, it seems Amuze

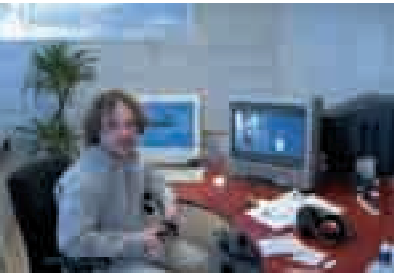
Stockholm seems to be a centre for Scandinavian games development, as Digital Illusions CE is also based in the city. Must be something in the water…



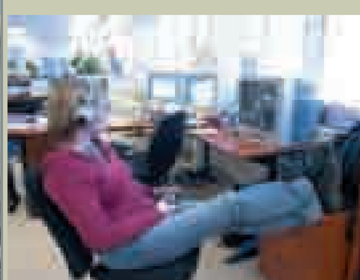


A team of around 35 people work at Amuze's Stockholm offices – all the staff are working on *Redemption* in order to make it as high-quality as possible.









is a trend-setter in this field. "Key creative and technical talents are likely to be involved to a greater or lesser extent throughout a project, so you 'sign' these people at the outset just as you would for a movie, and build long-term relationships that last from project to project," Lawrence explains. "Short-term needs are met by short-term contracting, again as you would in TV or film. It's a proven way to get the best bang for your buck."

Contracting creativity is an increasingly popular method of doing business, and it seems like the games industry is catching up with modern times as it matures into something greater than a 'kids' market'. However, with the increase in commercial value there is often a decrease in the value of true craftsmanship. Amuze, however, insists that it is an artisan of the games industry. "We could easily have gone for the multiple-team expansion route, but I've always felt that I want to deliver the publisher and consumer a high level of quality and not just churn out some factory-based, half-competent title," Kroknes explains. As gamers are used to being spoon-fed the latest yearly update repackaged and resold, the ethic that defines Amuze is enough to bring a tear to the eye. Lawrence acknowledges that the videogame road is "littered with corpses" as smaller developers struggle to compete in the modern, 'fast-buck' climate. Amuze itself has only produced two titles, the second of which isn't yet finished. As Kroknes puts it: "The reason for not doing multiple titles has simply been that whenever we do something we want to provide the publisher [and] consumer the highest level of quality and it's difficult to clone two teams ensuring the same high level of production values. Our mission is to do 1.5 titles at a time, so that during the finishing stages of one title we've moved onto the planning stages of the next."

Despite such ideals, even Amuze has to admit that there are drawbacks, even when working with a passionate team of games developers and players. "It's more challenging to manage and motivate a small team, because it's far more personal and hands-on than a regimented production line," says Lawrence. "But, for me, it's the only way to turn out heartfelt, highly crafted work with real passion behind it. If you're smart, the core team will communicate that passion to the contractors and other people you work with, taking some of the burden off you and ensuring even a massive production like *Headhunter: Redemption* is all pulling in the same direction." Lawrence is compelled to add: "I can see us expanding to the extent of having more than one title at different stages of development, but never to the point where it becomes a factory-style production line."

The company may have the best of intentions with its games, but this won't keep the cash rolling in. In order to survive, as a small developer there is an emphasis on staying one step ahead of the competition, which is why Kroknes and Lawrence are keen to stress that they have great plans for the future. "I believe Amuze has served its apprenticeship," says Lawrence. "The company now has the experience and the talent to move on to genuinely innovative

"I WANT TO DELIVER THE PUBLISHER AND CONSUMER A HIGH LEVEL OF QUALITY AND NOT JUST CHURN OUT SOME FACTORY-BASED, HALF-COMPETENT TITLE"

JOHN KROKNES, AMUZE

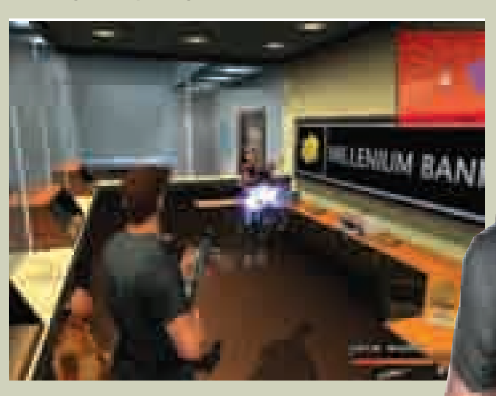


IT'S EVOLUTION, BABY, YEAH

As Amuze is only responsible for two games to date, both of which are based on the *Headhunter* franchise, there's no excuse for shoddy content.

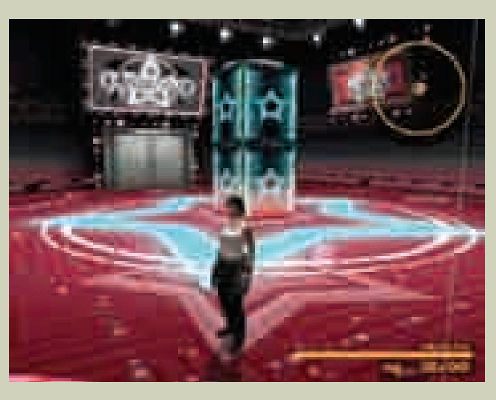
HEADHUNTER

When Jack Wade first appeared on consoles back in the day of the Dreamcast, he was something of a revelation. The soft-focus look of the game gave it a visually wonderful feel, and really brought the *Blade Runner*-style city to life. During his first campaign it was Jack's job to track down the Bloody Mary virus, which he did by shooting people, riding around on a motorbike and generally being a badass.



HEADHUNTER: REDEMPTION

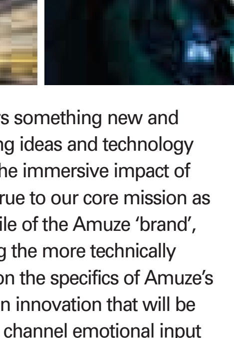
Now Jack is back, making Amuze's current-generation debut. Appearing on both PS2 and Xbox, he's brought a new partner along for the journey, Miss Leeza X. Although most of the narrative in the new title (set 20 years after the first game) follows the exploits of the feisty young lady, Jack makes many playable appearances. The bike sequences have been cut, but the visuals and sound are incredibly impressive to compensate, making *Redemption* a possible sleeper hit for 2004.



Jack Wade is back in *Headhunter: Redemption*, and showing the ravages of time. Still, he's got a lovely young lady friend to help him out this time, which must make life easier…

SOUNDS GREAT

Despite Amuze's use of contract work, there is a solid team at the studio that has contributed to both titles. This is evident in the new game's feel and look, which is a faithful yet advanced version of the original, with an emphasis on dark, futuristic action. However, the style of both games is greatly complemented by the moving score, composed by Richard Jacques. Jacques not only provided the music for the first *Headhunter* title, but he was also responsible for a number of Sonic The Hedgehog games before that. Hailing from Warwick, Jacques sprang onto the scene in 1996 by creating the soundtrack to the late Mega Drive Sonic title *Sonic 3D: Flickies Island*. His next project was *Sonic R* in 1997, and finally *Headhunter* in 2002. Jacques clearly has a good pedigree and is an excellent example of Amuze's continuing search for quality talent for the development of its games.



projects that offer players something new and exciting. We're developing ideas and technology that will definitely extend the immersive impact of videogames, while staying true to our core mission as entertainers. If that raises the profile of the Amuze 'brand', all well and good." Kroknes, being the more technically inclined, sheds a little more light on the specifics of Amuze's future. "I think people will enjoy an innovation that will be present in a future title, where we channel emotional input from the player into the direction of narratives – it's something that will revolutionise cut-scenes as we know them today," he explains. "Another thing we are seriously looking into is a format for creating franchises and feeding

> "WE'RE DEVELOPING IDEAS AND TECHNOLOGY THAT WILL DEFINITELY EXTEND THE IMMERSIVE IMPACT OF VIDEOGAMES"
>
> JOHN KROKNES, AMUZE



AMUZED

Seeing the funny side…

1 PHILIP LAWRENCE – In A Nutshell: Lawrence, a Brit, had a background in writing for US TV and advertising when recruited by Kroknes in 2001. He writes and directs *Redemption*.

2 JOHN KROKNES – In A Nutshell: Kroknes founded Amuze in 1996, having previously worked with the Mega Drive and PSone. Setting up shop in Stockholm he made the Dreamcast's *Headhunter*.

John Kroknes struck a deal with SEGA in 1996 to produce *Headhunter* for the Dreamcast – Kroknes says the deal is his proudest achievement.



the audience on a more regular basis, as found in seasons of episodic TV."

Despite these advances, Amuze is adamant that it will retain the same sort of feel and style in its future projects. It seems obvious to say, but it's already found a highly reputable publisher for its work, and an incredibly broad genre in which to operate – Amuze seems comfortable with its modus operandi and sees no real need to change in the future. "Action adventure is a broad enough genre for us," says Kroknes. "People do not watch only one action movie a year, even though the games industry seems to be very functionality orientated rather than focusing on offering the player a different experience or total package within each so-called genre like FPS, stealth, survival horror and so on." Very true. An increasing trend in games is that developers are trying to cram in extra features and modes that are unfaithful or incompatible with the main thrust of the experience. Stealth missions, first-person levels and missions on rails – they all seem like an attempt to appeal to a broader market, to keep the fickle consumer entertained at the expense of the game's purity. Amuze is offering an honest experience within a genre that works best for it, rather than rushing out inferior work.

Perhaps this is the main reason SEGA has stood by the small developer, despite its perfectionist way of working. "You tend to form very strong bonds with people in this business, personally, creatively and at a business level, and that's definitely true of Amuze and SEGA," admits Lawrence. Indeed, Kroknes lists the deal with the major third-party publisher as one of his proudest achievements. Lawrence also seems to enjoy Amuze's success. "Developing games is immensely more complicated and difficult than developing movies or TV, because you're harnessing so much technology and so many diverse talents," he says. "When all that 'gels' and the player has fun with the finished product just the way you hoped, it's definitely a buzz." Come autumn, when *Headhunter: Redemption* finally hits the shelves, let's hope Kroknes and Lawrence get that buzz again.



Jack (and Leeza) are well-equipped for life in the *Headhunter* universe.



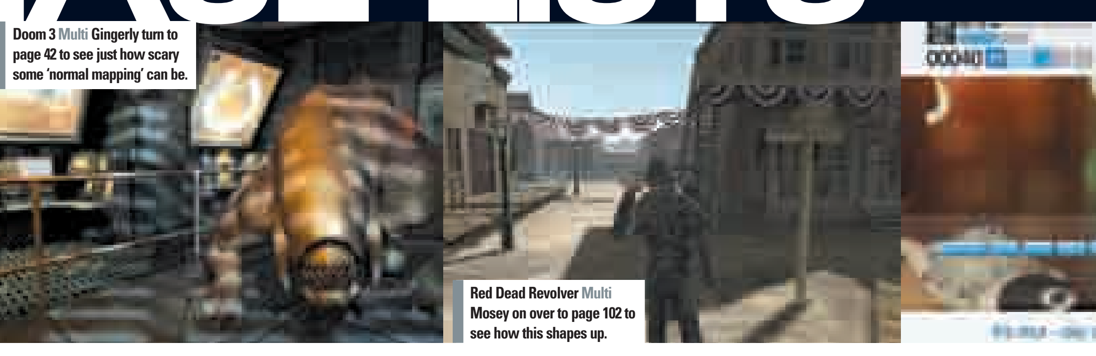
Concept art shows the industrial, futuristic ambience of *Redemption*.



RELEASE LISTS



Pikmin 2 GC Back to the garden…



Doom 3 Multi Gingerly turn to page 42 to see just how scary some 'normal mapping' can be.

Red Dead Revolver Multi Mosey on over to page 102 to see how this shapes up.

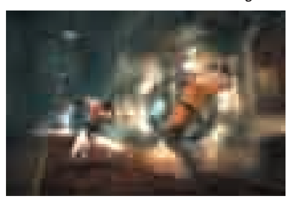


games™ MOST PLAYED

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME

Format:: Multi
Publisher: Ubisoft

With the news that a sequel to this, one of the best games of last year, will be on show at E3, we decided to revisit Persia and save time itself once again. With all formats now accounted for, there really is no reason for you not to own this game.



ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Capcom

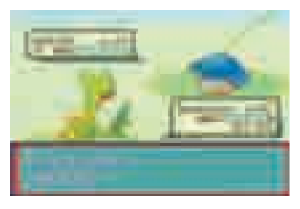
From the moment the first English version of *Demon Siege* arrived in the office, the disc has taken up permanent residence in several machines. Stunning to look at and stylish to boot, is it as good as the Japanese reviews have built it up to be? Find out next issue.



POKÉMON RUBY/SAPPHIRE

Format: Game Boy Advance
Publisher: Nintendo

You can blame *Colosseum* for the resurgence of training and evolution among the team – the massively contagious Pokémon bug is doing the rounds again and shows no signs of letting up. Has any handheld game ever had so much to do and so many ways in which to do it?





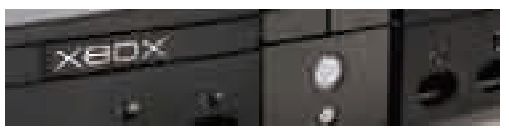
PLAYSTATION2

Month	Title	Publisher	
MAY '04			
28 May	SingStar	Sony	
28 May	Red Dead Revolver	Rockstar	
28 May	Hyper Street Fighter II: Anniversary Edition	Capcom	
28 May	Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness	Koei	Wanted
28 May	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA	
28 May	Karaoke Stage	Konami	
TBC	MTV Music Generator 3	Codemasters	
JUNE '04			
01 June	Driv3r	Atari	Wanted
04 June	Perfect Ace 2: The Championships	Oxygen	
18 June	.hack://mutation	Atari	
25 June	Shrek 2	Activision	
TBC	Ghost Master	Empire	
TBC	Mashed	Empire	
TBC	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Wanted
TBC	Syphon Filter: The Omega Strain	Sony	
TBC	Shellshock: 'Nam 67	Eidos	
Q2 '04			
TBC	Spy Vs Spy	TDK	
TBC	Cold Winter	Vivendi	Wanted
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	Onimusha 3: Demon Siege	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Richard Burns Rally	SCi	
TBC	Smash Court Pro Tournament 2	Sony	
TBC	Onimusha Blade Warriors	Capcom	
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Spider-Man 2	Activision	
TBC	Athens 2004	Sony	
Q3 '04			
TBC	Headhunter: Redemption	SEGA	
TBC	StarCraft: Ghost	Vivendi	
TBC	Neo Contra	Konami	
TBC	Crimson Tears	Capcom	
TBC	Sly 2: Band Of Thieves	Sony	
TBC	Gran Turismo 4	Sony	Wanted
TBC	Burnout 3	EA	Wanted
TBC	Blood Will Tell	SEGA	
TBC	EyeToy: Play 2	Sony	Wanted
TBC	Dance: UK 2	Big Ben	
TBC	Juiced	Acclaim	
TBC	Resident Evil Outbreak	Capcom	
TBC	Conflict Vietnam	SCi	
TBC	Jak 3	Sony	
TBC	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	
TBC	Gradius V	Konami	Wanted
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	Ratchet & Clank 3	Sony	
TBC	Killer 7	Capcom	Wanted
TBC	Killzone	Sony	
TBC	Nightmare Before Christmas	Capcom	



GAMECUBE

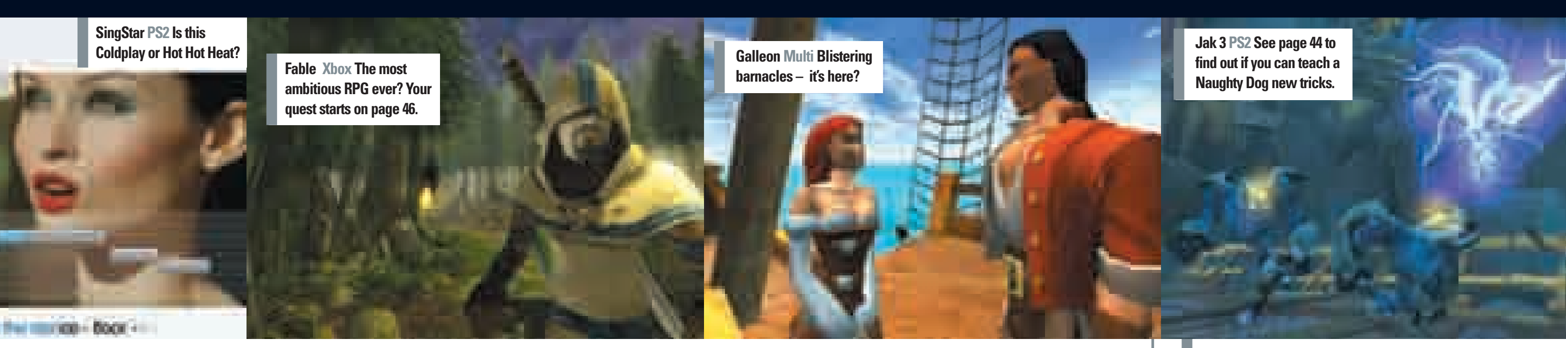
Month	Title	Publisher	
MAY '04			
28 May	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA	
TBC	Pokémon Colosseum	Nintendo	
JUNE '04			
18 June	Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	
TBC	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Wanted
TBC	Phantasy Star Online III: C.A.R.D. Revolution	SEGA	
Q2 '04			
TBC	Mario Tennis	Nintendo	
TBC	Spy Vs Spy	TDK	
TBC	Geist	Nintendo	
TBC	Terminator 3: Redemption	Atari	
TBC	Nintendo Puzzle Collection	Nintendo	
TBC	Pikmin 2	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Paper Mario 2	Nintendo	Wanted
Q3 '04			
TBC	Wario Ware: Mega Party Game$	Nintendo	
TBC	StarCraft Ghost	Vivendi	
TBC	Donkey Konga	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Zelda: Four Swords Adventure	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Killer 7	Capcom	Wanted



XBOX

Month	Title	Publisher	
MAY '04			
28 May	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA	
TBC	Obscure	Microïds	
TBC	MTV Music Generator 3	Codemasters	
JUNE '04			
01 June	Driv3r	Atari	Wanted
11 June	Galleon	SCi	
24 June	Shrek 2	Activision	
TBC	The Fast And The Furious	Vivendi	
TBC	Shadow Ops	Atari	
TBC	Ghost Master	Empire	
TBC	Shellshock: 'Nam 67	Eidos	
Q2 '04			
TBC	Serious Sam: Next Encounter	Global Star	
TBC	RalliSport Challenge 2	Microsoft	Wanted

CALM YOUR FEVERISH ANTICIPATION WITH OUR COMPREHENSIVE LIST OF FORTHCOMING RELEASES


SingStar PS2 Is this Coldplay or Hot Hot Heat?

Fable Xbox The most ambitious RPG ever? Your quest starts on page 46.

Galleon Multi Blistering barnacles – it's here?

Jak 3 PS2 See page 44 to find out if you can teach a Naughty Dog new tricks.

TBC	Spy Vs Spy	TDK	
TBC	Conker: Live And Uncut	Microsoft	
TBC	Spider-Man 2	Activision	
TBC	Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	
TBC	Dead Or Alive Ultimate	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Headhunter: Redemption	SEGA	
TBC	Call Of Duty: Finest Hour	Activision	
TBC	Advent Rising	Majesco	
TBC	Breakdown	EA	
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	Wanted
Q3 '04			
TBC	Juiced	Acclaim	
TBC	Kameo: Elements Of Power	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	StarCraft Ghost	Vivendi	
TBC	Burnout 3	EA	Wanted
TBC	Painkiller	Dreamcatcher	
TBC	Sudeki	Microsoft	
TBC	BC	Microsoft	
TBC	Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy	Midway	
TBC	Halo 2	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Richard Burns Rally	SCi	
TBC	Silent Hill 4: The Room	Konami	
TBC	Conflict Vietnam	SCi	
TBC	Fable	Microsoft	
TBC	Jade Empire	Microsoft	Wanted
TBC	Far Cry Instincts	Ubisoft	
TBC	Otogi 2	SEGA	



PC

Month	Title	Publisher	
MAY '04			
28 May	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA	
28 May	America's Most Wanted	Play It	
TBC	Obscure	Microïds	
JUNE '04			
01 June	Driv3r	Atari	Wanted
04 June	Thief: Deadly Shadows	Eidos	Wanted
04 June	World Championship Snooker	Codemasters	
18 June	Ground Control II: Operation Exodus	Vivendi	
25 June	Shrek 2	Activision	
TBC	Shadow Ops	Atari	
TBC	EverQuest II	Ubisoft	
Q2 '04			
TBC	Evil Genius	Vivendi	
TBC	Black 9	Majesco	
TBC	Star Wars: Republic Commando	Activision	
TBC	Spider-Man 2	Activision	
TBC	Richard Burns Rally	SCi	
TBC	Doom 3	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Medal Of Honor: Pacific Assault	EA	
TBC	Warhammer Online	SEGA	
TBC	Full Spectrum Warrior	THQ	
TBC	Advent Rising	Majesco	
TBC	Eastside Hockey Manager	SEGA	
Q3 '04			
TBC	Ultima X: Odyssey	EA	
TBC	World Of Warcraft	Vivendi	
TBC	Leisure Suit Larry: Magna Cum Laude	Vivendi	
TBC	Sid Meier's Pirates!	Atari	
TBC	S.T.A.L.K.E.R.: Oblivion Lost	THQ	Wanted
TBC	Rome: Total War	Activision	Wanted
TBC	Half-Life 2	Vivendi	Wanted
TBC	The Matrix Online	Warner	Wanted
TBC	Vampire: The Masquerade – Bloodlines	Activision	
TBC	Tribes: Vengeance	Vivendi	



GAME BOY ADVANCE

Month	Title	Publisher	
MAY '04			
28 May	Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban	EA	
28 May	Kirby's Magic Mirror	Nintendo	
TBC	Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand	Konami	
JUNE '04			
25 June	Spyro Fusion	Vivendi	
25 June	Sonic Advance 3	THQ	
25 June	Crash Fusion	Vivendi	
25 June	Shrek 2	Activision	
TBC	Shining Force: Resurrection Of The Dark Dragon	THQ	Wanted
Q2 '04			
TBC	Fire Emblem	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Donkey Kong Country 2	Nintendo	
TBC	CT Special Forces 3	LSP	
TBC	Mario Vs Donkey Kong	Nintendo	
TBC	Yu Yu Spirit Detective	Atari	
TBC	Pokémon Leaf Green/Fire Red	Nintendo	Wanted
TBC	Hamtaro: Rainbow Rescue	Nintendo	
TBC	Mario Golf: Advance Tour	Nintendo	
Q3 '04			
TBC	Guardian Heroes	SEGA	Wanted
TBC	Metal Slug Advance	SNK	Wanted
TBC	Banjo Pilot	Nintendo	
TBC	Double Dragon Advance	TBC	

PLEASE NOTE: While every effort has been made to ensure these dates are correct at the time of going to press, they are liable to change at short notice. It's not our fault, mind. We just print what we're told. Don't shoot the messenger…



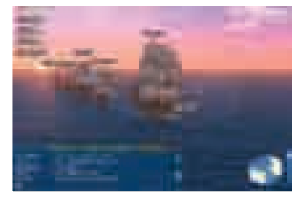
VIEWTIFUL JOE

Format: PlayStation2
Publisher: Capcom
GameCube owners may have already been treated to Capcom's wonderful retro-chic pummel-'em-up but very soon it'll be open season on evil henchman again. Throw in Dante from *Devil May Cry* as a bonus character (trust us, it's not as bad as it sounds) and maybe the game will finally get the recognition it deserves.



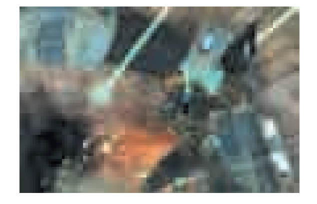
DAIKOUKAI JIDAI

Format: PC
Publisher: Koei
Why has nobody thought of this before? This pirate-themed MMORPG may not be slated for a UK release yet, but considering Koei's recent commitment to the PAL market it can only be a matter of time. Join a crew, build up your swashbuckling skills and sail the high seas in search of treasure. Sounds like heaven.



HALO 2

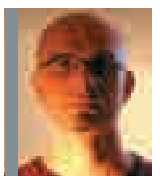
Format: Xbox
Publisher: Microsoft
It seems the horizon is the first place to look when trying to find Bungie's latest title, but hopefully the next few months will see it come screaming out of the distance and into our hands in some shape or form. New screenshots are leaking almost daily, and we get more excited with each one. Get the Live Starter Packs in now… y'know, just in case.





THE PEOPLE IN THE GAMES INDUSTRY TELL IT LIKE IT IS…

PC GAMERS JUST WANNA HAVE FUN… DON'T THEY?



There are probably a million topics on various forums on the 'PC versus console' issue, and, as is often the case with online discussions, they often turn into "your PS2/Xbox/GC suxx0rz!". But that doesn't change the fact it's an interesting topic… at least for me, because it concerns our first game, *Painkiller*.

Painkiller was always designed with a 'back to the roots of fun' principle: no crouch button, no sniping with zoom in/out, no lean left/right keys, no puzzles, no managing your teammates and no stealth. It's just pure, in-your-face action – blood, sweat, gore and explosions. Some people love the game for it, but some don't and complain about the 'no brain' factor.

As an example, in one review the game scored 8.4 but the text added 'make it 9.4 if you like action games'. Funny thing is, you'll hardly ever read such a complaint in a review of a console game. By the end of the year, *Painkiller* will be out on Xbox and I get the feeling that no-one will use the 'it's just action' argument against it. Is that just because console players are generally kids who only want trigger-happy games? Of course not. You can find every kind of genre on consoles, from deep strategies (*Dynasty Tactics*) to shooters (*R-Type Final*). Heck, one of the most popular Game Boy games is *Advance Wars*, which occupies the charts along with *Metroid*, a hardcore action title.

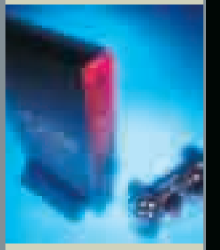
So why is it that console gamers live happily with all kinds of genres? Did PC gamers forget that games are sometimes just about unadulterated fun? That sometimes it's okay to play on primal instincts rather than with your grey cells? Perhaps. But it's not for me to give the answers – I'm just giving your PC brain something to chew on.

Adrian Chmielarz
Project Leader, People Can Fly

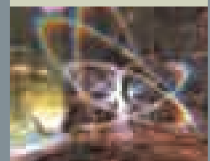


FROM THE FRONT

MIXED FORTUNES FOR SONY DESPITE HUGE SALES, AND ANALYSTS SAY NINTENDO IS SAFE FROM THE PSP



Despite enormous sales, Sony's figures are down.



Final Fantasy continues to do well for Square Enix.

ANNUAL PROFITS CONTINUE TO SOAR FOR INDUSTRY BIGWIGS

CASH, MONEY AND FAME

The past couple of months have seen many firms release their figures for the past financial year and, as usual, it's a mixed bag of shocks, surprises and inevitability. We've seen Interplay rise from the dead (albeit in limited form) thanks to the helping hand of Vivendi, Midway shares rocketing on the back of a speculated buyout by head of Viacom Sumner Redstone, and Square Enix predicting huge increases in revenue, even before its biggest year since the merger which will see new products in the *Final Fantasy*, *Dragon Quest*, *Front Mission* and *Kingdom Hearts* series. Strong sales of *Final Fantasy X-2* and the ever-earning *Final Fantasy XI* have also helped bring in the pennies, something there will be no shortage of with a just-under-30 per cent increase in profit over the previous year.

Retailer Game had a busy year, improving on the previous year's figures by nearly 10 per cent. Unsurprisingly, Sony also exceeded its expectations for the year – income of ¥88 billion (£477 million) represented a 50 per cent increase on predictions, but at the same time fell some ¥27.5 billion (£150 million) short of last year's figure. Revenue is quoted at a sickening ¥7.5 trillion (a ridiculous £41 billion) for the 12-month period, again up on predictions and remaining steady year-on-year.

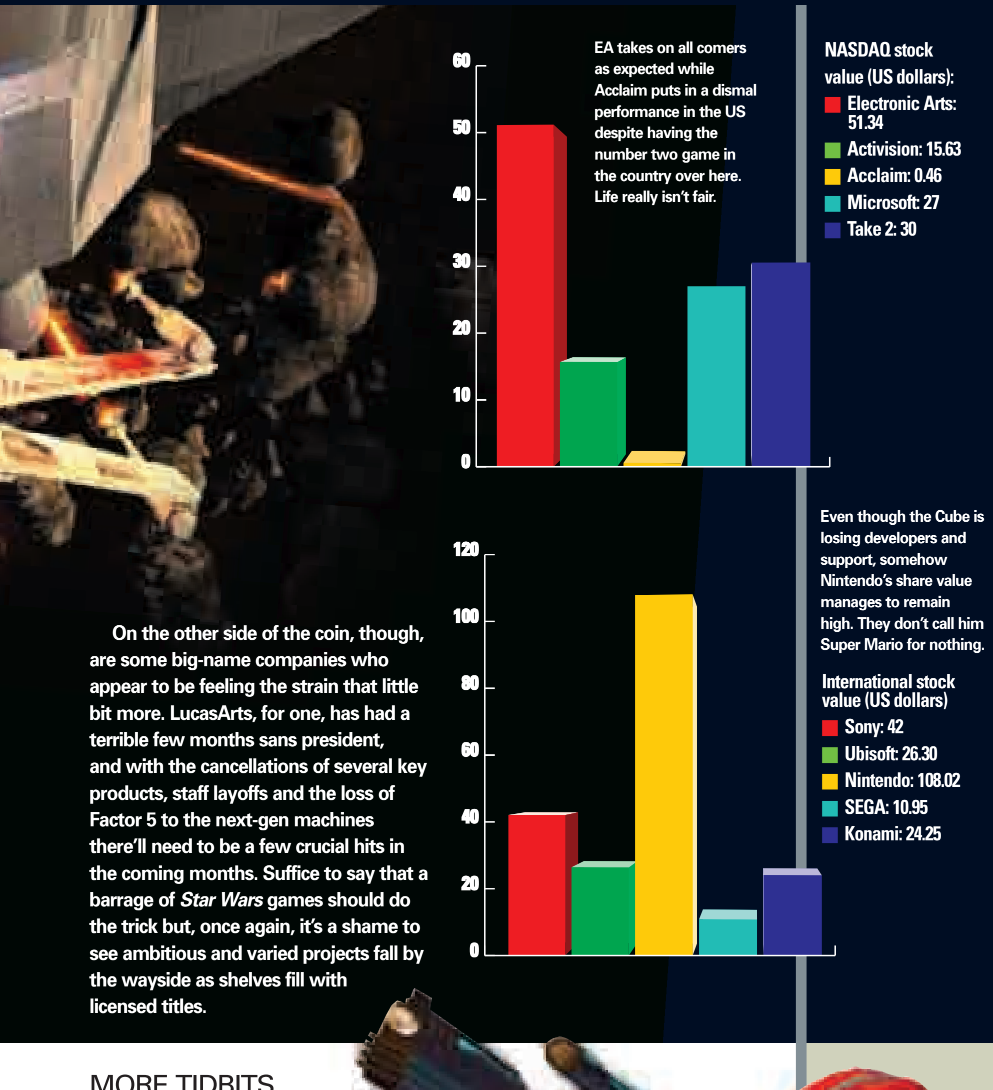


SHARE AND SHARE ALIKE

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BAD PSP?

Don't worry, Mario – it might not be so bad after all. This time last year, talk of a forthcoming Sony handheld was rippling across the globe and you'd have thought that Nintendo had due cause to worry. The handheld market is perhaps the last true bastion of Nintendo's strength, so the fact that shares in the company fell by 15 per cent shortly after Sony's PSP announcement last year will have started alarm bells ringing. Apparently, though, it's not that bad after all, and several independent analysts have predicted good things for both the DS and the PSP.

Their reasoning is simple – Sony's machine is a more adult-oriented product that will be relatively expensive while the DS (which has been strongly thought to hit shelves at a sub-£100 price point) is, in true Nintendo style, a games machine through and through with an emphasis on the younger market. This means the two will be far from the direct rivals they are in today's console market. Still, never underestimate the power of the N-Gage…

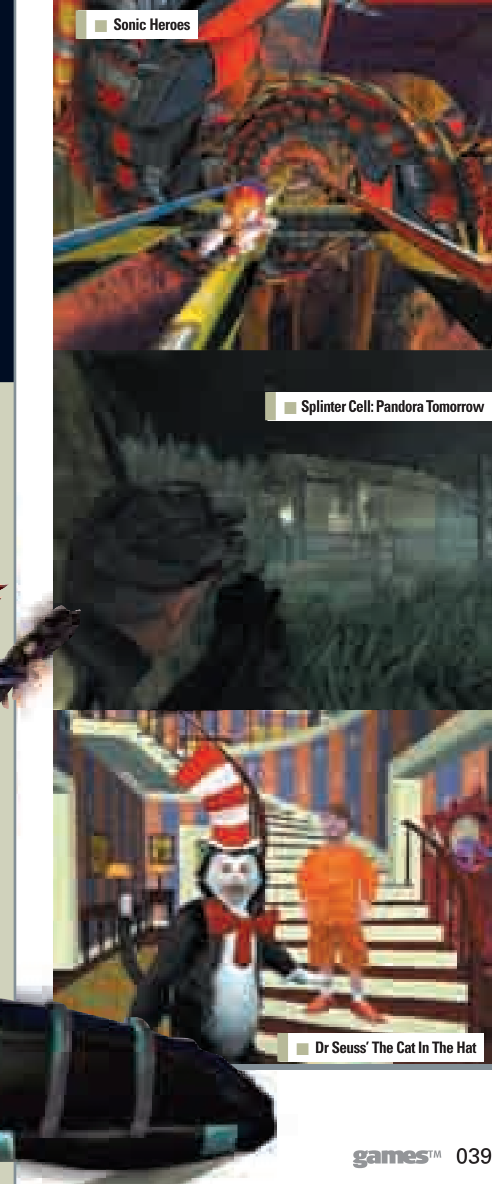


On the other side of the coin, though, are some big-name companies who appear to be feeling the strain that little bit more. LucasArts, for one, has had a terrible few months sans president, and with the cancellations of several key products, staff layoffs and the loss of Factor 5 to the next-gen machines there'll need to be a few crucial hits in the coming months. Suffice to say that a barrage of *Star Wars* games should do the trick but, once again, it's a shame to see ambitious and varied projects fall by the wayside as shelves fill with licensed titles.

UK MULTIFORMAT TOP TEN

	Title	Publisher	Format
1	Sonic Heroes	SEGA	Multi
2	World Championship Rugby	Acclaim	Multi
3	Norton Internet Security 2004	Norton	PC
4	Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	Multi
5	007: Everything Or Nothing	EA	Multi
6	FIFA 2004	EA	Multi
7	LMA Manager 2004	Codemasters	Multi
8	The Sims	EA	Multi
9	This Is Football 2004	Sony	PS2
10	Dr Seuss' The Cat In The Hat	Vivendi	Multi

Security is still the order of the day as another quiet week sees Sonic and pals back on top, but quite what the nauseating slight on the good name of Dr Seuss is doing propping up the chart is beyond us. I do not like it, Sam I am…



MORE TIDBITS ON THE FUTURE OF GAMING

WHAT NEXT?

With the Game Developers' Conference really starting the next-gen ball rolling, more details of what we'll all be playing a few years down the line are beginning to emerge. Most of these are Xbox-centric, with the successor to the Microsoft console now due in mid-2005. This follows the recent revelation that as little as six months ago the firm had solid plans to release the Xbox 2 at the end of this year and already has teams, in particular in-house hopefuls Rare, working on software.

In addition, all further XSN sports titles have been pulled for this year. Many of them are expected to reappear on or around the new machine's launch in slightly shinier forms. This represents one hell of a risk, and while a head start of anything up to a year on the other two successors is very much worth going out on a limb for, the slightest delay could see 2005 being a dangerously quiet year for Microsoft, particularly if Sony or Nintendo get a move on.



"Oooh, I 'ate that duck" **Dynamite Dux Arcade [SEGA] 1989**


6000
PIN
= 1
GOAL
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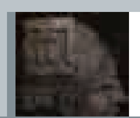
DOOM 3



■ He might be wearing the same uniform, but believe us – he's not on your side…

■ Even though it might not be *Doom* as we know it, *Doom 3*s atmosphere is going to be second to none.

"DOOM 3 WILL CHANGE WHAT PEOPLE EXPECT TO SEE AND EXPERIENCE IN A PC GAME"
TODD HOLLENSHEAD, CEO, ID SOFTWARE



DEVELOPER PROFILE

id Software has been a constant leader in the creation of revolutionary first-person shooters since *Doom* pretty much launched the scene in 1993. Based in Mesquite, Texas, id has produced every *Doom*, *Quake* and *Wolfenstein* game available on PC to date, and looks set to continue its great run with *Doom 3*.

HISTORY

- **RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN 2001 [PC]**
- **QUAKE 1996 [PC]**
- **DOOM 1993 [PC]**

THE GLOOM IS LIFTING AND DOOM IS READY TO SHINE

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: id Software
RELEASE: TBC '04 (Japan/US: TBC)
GENRE: Shoot-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-2

The classic FPS series returns with a scary-as-hell remake for the new breed of PC- and Xbox-owning *Doom* fans.

It's hard to imagine a gaming world devoid of the first-person shooter, but before 1993 this was pretty much the case. Then id made *Doom* and the world went first-person mad, lapping up titles that became the most-loved franchises on any format. *Half-Life*, *Wolfenstein*, *Quake* and, most recently, *Halo* are the better examples of the craze that's still going strong over ten years later, but now it looks as if the king is ready to reclaim his crown.

Details have been trickling out of *Doom 3* HQ for over two years, and it was widely thought that the much-anticipated title would slip into 2005 as *Half-Life 2* loomed. However, it seems that the doubters may be proved wrong, with the new *Doom* game no doubt taking pride of place on Activision's E3 stand this year to show the crowds exactly why it's still number one.

Doom 3 isn't strictly a new game in the series, as it adopts the role of a remake à la *Resident Evil* on the GameCube. The developer has decided to pay homage to the original game's phenomenal success by building a 3D version that is everything it wanted to achieve first time round now that the technology is no longer restrictive. Having said that, id has been forced to employ a revolutionary form of rendering known as normal mapping to achieve the level of detail it wanted for *Doom*.

Technicalities aside, let's just say that this allows the game to achieve better-looking models at a reduced polygon count, but with a large drain on the CPU. Start saving your pennies, people, because you'll need the PC equivalent of Arnie to run this baby. That is, unless you own an Xbox, as a version for Microsoft's console is planned for the end of the year. Not suffering from the problem of system requirements, and with the added bonus of built-in Dolby Digital, the Xbox version is being tweaked massively to help the machine process the mass of graphics data that needs to be translated from the PC.

So, aside from looking great, what will the new instalment offer? Surely the FPS can't be progressed beyond its natural limits? *Doom 3* doesn't seem to be concerned with exceeding the genre like *Half-Life 2*, but instead intends to deliver something a little different for the *Doom* fans who have waited patiently to see their digital drug in glorious 3D. In fact, the extra dimension offered by the new game is a crucial factor in how id has chosen to present this game, particularly when you combine it with the planned darkness…

Doom 3 is aiming to be the most terrifying game of the year, plunging players into massive areas of darkness and then playing with their nerves by exploiting the surround sound. Gamers will be trapped in pitch-black areas with only the muzzle-flash of their own weapon for light, and they'll be assaulted from all sides by terrifyingly mutated creatures that will shuffle, swarm, gallop, tear, shred and shoot. Hideous demons will rip their way through doors, burst out of pipes and crash through glass windows.

More than a game, *Doom 3* will be an utterly engaging first-person experience like no other, which will have action junkies heading back for more: proof, if it were needed, that the game that started it all can reclaim its place at the top of the FPS food chain.

MARS ATTACKS

As this is a remake of the first game there are a number of givens in *Doom 3*. For starters, the story is the same: the Union Aerospace Corporation has been using its bases on Mars and its moons to conduct experiments in space and dimension travel. Naturally, something has gone terribly wrong, and demons are pouring out of a wormhole in the UAC base. It's up to you to plug this gap by destroying the device, as well as eliminating all the monsters that have spewed out of it by using all the latest weapons in a one-man-army-style cleaning operation. All the old favourite enemies are set to return, accompanied by a few surprise newcomers. Expect Revenants, Zombies, Lost Souls, Demons and new creatures, Trites, that resemble the head-on-legs beast from *The Thing*. Be very afraid.

"DOOM 3 WILL BE AN UTTERLY ENGAGING FIRST-PERSON EXPERIENCE LIKE NO OTHER"



If you think that having this thing heading towards you won't be scary, you're lying.

JAK 3

RETURN OF THE JAK FOR THE FINAL PART OF NAUGHTY DOG'S TRILOGY

There was plenty of fawning when *Jak* fans first discovered the *Grand Theft Auto* structure integrated into *Jak II*, but in retrospect it's the wild innovation at the game's heart that stands out as being worthy of praise. To come up with enough fresh ideas to consistently enthral and entertain gamers isn't an easy task, so it's fortunate that Naughty Dog can yet again call upon the talents of *Sonic The Hedgehog* level designer Hirokazu Yasuhara. "He keeps this journal of ideas, just pages and pages, and he dates it every day," says *Jak 3*'s game director, Evan Wells. "You can flip through it and see all these crazy little gameplay widgets he's come up with, and think 'oh, that would be really cool to try that here'. He brings a unique sense of design to the team."

In addition to Yasuhara-san, Naughty Dog has hired helping hands such as *Legacy Of Kain* director Amy Henning to craft *Jak 3*. The extra talent shines through with so many new elements and enhancements it's hard to note them all without descending into lists. One major change is that guns offer more flexibility via upgrades. Whether it's the Red Shotgun being upgraded to a Shockwave gun or the Rifle being altered to fire Ricochet Bullets, everything in Jak's arsenal can be upgraded and modified, with the secondary and tertiary fire options coming at the expense of more ammunition. Pleasingly, you can switch between all the upgrades using the D-pad, negating the need to pause and wade through separate menus.

Vehicles will almost certainly play a bigger part in *Jak 3*. Dune Buggies and a wide range of other transport are included to eliminate the complaint that it took too long to travel between locations in the last instalment. That each vehicle is unique with two- and four-wheel drive, gear ratios and different torques is testament to the research that's been poured into getting the handling right. "We have a physics programmer who loves all that stuff, so it's a treat for him to work on something like this," says Wells. "He spends hours reading up on physics books understanding how it works and he playtested the driving sections himself. But we're still not even close to being done with it – it's going to be an ongoing process to refine the controls and make it better and better." Those who don't want to walk can also ride lizards or use Jak's Hoverboard, this time tweaked for extra manoeuvrability.

Jak 3 will also mark the first appearance of Light Jak. Morphing into Light Jak will allow you to glide, use a shield and regenerate health – a change from the predominantly aggressive tactics of Dark Jak. This contrast of gaming styles ties in neatly with the storyline, as religious zealots in Jak's world are pushing either the Light or Dark path. As with the addition of gunplay and vehicles, it remains to be seen how Light Jak will affect the overall balance considering Naughty Dog is already juggling so many other elements. Even so, the short taster of *Jak 3* we played was fun and original, and Wells' passion for his project is infectious. "I think it is the subtleties of a game that distinguish a triple-A title," he says. "Subconsciously you'll notice, but consciously you might never pay attention. The little extra touches will give the impression that you're playing a quality game."

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: SCEE
DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog
RELEASE: Oct '04 (US: Q4 '04)
GENRE: Platform
PLAYERS: 1

Platforming, shooting, Dune Buggies, Bomb-bots, Hoverboards, Light Jak… it'd be quicker to name what the genre hotchpotch of *Jak 3* doesn't contain.

WHAT'S THE STORY?

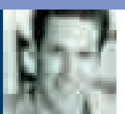
***Jak 3* opens with Jak being led to the desert wasteland outside Haven City, as he has become the scapegoat for the city's ills. A female soldier discreetly passes Jak a beacon so when he eventually collapses from exhaustion marauders from the nearby 'secret' city of Spargus are able to find him. Evan Wells says tying up the story for the final part of the *Jak* trilogy was tricky. "It was quite tough to get all the parts to the perfect conclusion we wanted but I think there are going to be some really satisfying twists to the story that will give people a good laugh," he explains. One character that will garner attention is Pecker, a colourful monkey/macaw hybrid that has plenty of comedy stand-offs with Daxter, while we expect to see the female soldier who saved Jak crop up in the storyline again…**

"JAK 3 WILL MARK THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF LIGHT JAK – MORPHING INTO HIM WILL ALLOW YOU TO GLIDE, USE A SHIELD AND REGENERATE HEALTH"



It's not just sharp driving skills required, as your vehicle can also jump out of danger and shoot.

If a Dune Buggy or Hoverboard isn't your style you can always ride a giant lizard. Really.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Naughty Dog created Sony's first 'icon', Crash Bandicoot, and has consistently maintained its 'quality over quantity' mantra. Now transferring its ambitions to *Jak And Daxter*, Naughty Dog will part company with Jason Rubin following *Jak 3*, allowing Evan Wells to continue with the series.

HISTORY

- **JAK II** 2003 [PS2]
- **JAK AND DAXTER: THE PRECURSOR LEGACY** 2001 [PS2]
- **CRASH BANDICOOT** 1996 [PSone]

Three upgrades for each gun should make shooting a tactical affair, if only for choice of weapon.

"WE'RE TRYING TO DO SOMETHING NEW RATHER THAN THROWING JAK INTO NEW LEVELS AND GIVING HIM MORE ENEMIES"

EVAN WELLS, GAME DIRECTOR, NAUGHTY DOG

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

HARDER, BETTER, FASTER, STRONGER

JAK II + NEW TALENT x DUNE BUGGIES = JAK 3

Naughty Dog is keeping quiet about the nature of Light Jak's last ability.

Using the Dune Buggy will cut down on your journey times.

FABLE



■ If you choose the path of the assassin your skin will bleach, like this unsightly extra from *Blade II*.

■ Whether or not you'll be able to level up in *Fable* is uncertain, but we're willing to bet it looks something like this.

■ This hairy beast gives *Fable* a wonderful fairy-tale look. But is he a pet, an enemy or dinner?

"EACH PERSON PLAYERS AID, EACH FLOWER THEY CRUSH, EACH CREATURE THEY SLAY, WILL CHANGE THE WORLD FOREVER"

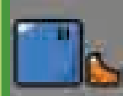
BIG BLUE BOX PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

WELCOME TO TOTAL FREEDOM OF CHOICE. ALLEGEDLY

LEGENDS + PETER MOLYNEUX x YOU DECIDE = FABLE





DEVELOPER PROFILE

Big Blue Box is a relatively new developer based in Guildford. Founded in 1999 it was snapped up by Microsoft a year later as a first-party developer. Since *Fable* was announced with the Xbox, way back in 2001, it's been the singular passion of the developers at Big Blue Box.

HISTORY

FABLE IS THE FIRST TITLE BY BIG BLUE BOX



This guy looks a lot like Robin Hood, further enhancing the mythical feel of Molyneux's ambitious game.

It's an RPG, so there'll be plenty of magic available in *Fable*, much like this savage-looking, Jedi-esque lightning.

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Microsoft
DEVELOPER: Big Blue Box
RELEASE: TBC '04 (Japan/US: TBC)
GENRE: RPG
PLAYERS: 1

Take control of the entire life of your hero as you guide him through every important decision he will ever have to make.

WILL THERE EVER BE A ONCE UPON A TIME?

Any Xbox owners who are unaware of *Fable* are probably clinically dead, as the game has been hotly tipped and widely speculated upon since its announcement as *Project Ego* back when the Xbox was an exciting new console prospect from a geeky PC manufacturer. While many predicted that the Xbox would go belly-up within a year, no-one anticipated that it might take three years to see one of the supposed launch titles. Then again, it is a Molyneux game and therefore time is of secondary importance to imagination. And what an imagination it is too, as *Fable* has been threatening to revolutionise the RPG for years. In fact, so ambitious was the project at its conception, that if even half the features appear in the finished title it will achieve its goal of changing the face of the genre.

However, dogged by slippage and the need to keep up with the ever-increasing competence of other developers, *Fable* has slowly moved down the wish list of Xbox gamers. The fact that several features have already been cropped – including the entire multiplayer concept – has not helped matters, so now it appears Microsoft is ready to throw *Fable* into the public eye whether Peter likes it or not. The game itself is an advanced microcosm of Molyneux's earlier PC effort *Black & White*, where the player would affect their surroundings and 'creature' through the decisions they took regarding the inhabitants of their world. *Fable* sees the player in control of one hero as he progresses through an entire lifetime in a quest to find the parents who were snatched from him when he was ten.

The gameworld is a massive, self-contained environment where people live out their lives regardless of what our hero does. There are fellow warriors to either befriend or fight against; there are creatures that can be kept as pets; arts and crafts to be learnt; magic to be discovered and trades to be plied. According to the path a player chooses for their character their physical appearance will change, so, for example, a warrior will grow bulging muscles, whereas a thief or assassin will remain lank and pale skinned through living in constant darkness. Players may choose to marry, but gain too many battle scars and women will be repulsed by your appearance, leading to your character being ostracised from some villages. The possibilities promised appear to be endless, which is why *Fable* has been a slave to Peter Molyneux's (and the Xbox-owning public's) imagination for all these years.

However, there comes a time when the line has to be drawn and the game has to reach the eagerly awaiting public. According to rumour and the massive amount of new assets that have been appearing in recent months, it seems that the time for its release is at last drawing near. A totally new video showcasing plenty of in-game footage was released at the recent Game Developers' Conference, showing *Fable* running in a finished-looking form. Microsoft has also confirmed that the theme tune for the game has been penned and recorded by none other than the legendary Danny Elfman (Tim Burton's favourite composer), indicating that the final layer of polish is already being applied.

Whether this is all too little too late remains to be seen, as the endless delays and broken promises threaten to turn *Fable* into a legend in its own mould: the unsung fairy tale.

"THERE COMES A TIME WHEN THE LINE HAS TO BE DRAWN AND THE GAME HAS TO REACH THE EAGERLY AWAITING PUBLIC"

NEVER ENDING STORY

***Fable* is touting itself as the game that will never be the same twice, and boasts that if a player replays it their new adventure will be a totally unique experience. Back in 2001 this was a weighty claim, but titles like *Deus Ex: Invisible War* and *Knights Of The Old Republic* have since provided gameplay that borders on this 'unique every time' goal. Should *Fable* manage to deliver this aspect of gaming it would undoubtedly be a step forward, but, sadly, it's just not going to be the revolutionary feature it once was. However, with the removal of the multiplayer mode it would appear that attention has been focused on the single-player game. Even if this is the case, we'll still be happy just to play it once…**

KILLZONE



Melee attacks are deadly up-close and appear to use a combo system very similar to that promised by *Halo 2*.

Settings revealed so far consist of urban and jungle locations, but we're promised more environments based on real wars.

SONY INVITES YOU TO ENTER THE ZONE

PS2 **This, we're reliably informed, is going to be the year of the first-person shooter.** The likes of *Doom 3*, *Half-Life 2* and (drum roll, please) *Halo 2* promise to revitalise a genre that, as games like *Unreal II* and *Rising Sun* have warned, is running headlong into the realms of mediocrity. However, one game that will almost certainly perk up the FPS on the PlayStation2 is *Killzone* – indeed, the game is so highly thought of right now that Sony is hoping that it can go directly up against *Halo 2* this Christmas…

We'll stay with the comparisons with *Halo* for the moment because, in its own way, *Killzone* is as important to PS2 as 'that' game was for Xbox. Bungie's classic taught us – among many other things – that it's important for an FPS to have a well-crafted backstory to lend credibility to what's happening on screen. *Killzone* has this; ignoring the B-movie-style, brightly-coloured (and slightly ironic) aliens of *Halo*, it takes elements of real-life conflicts and then re-imagines them in a future war.

> "EARLY FOOTAGE TO SNEAK OUT OF GUERRILLA'S STUDIOS DEPICTS A GAME THAT'S IN DESPERATE NEED OF OPTIMISATION"

Thus, the game follows you and three fellow ISA soldiers (forces still loyal to Earth) on a suicidal mission behind enemy lines after a devastating attack on a colony. Originally, the game was going to be based on conflicts that actually happened, much like *Medal Of Honor*. However, different members of the team wanted to make a game based on different wars and battles, so a compromise was reached – by setting the game in a sci-fi world, Guerrilla was able to incorporate elements from all these wars in one game and satisfy everyone's desire to bring their preferred conflict to life.

The design of the separatist Helghast factions (the guys with the orange eyes) are based on the Kaiser's soldiers in the First World War, while the settings evoke the trench warfare of the Somme, the jungle warfare in Vietnam and the battles that took place in the ruins of Stalingrad during the Second World War. The result is that *Killzone* has a unique look and, importantly from a marketing point of view, isn't going to be mentioned in the same breath as all those 'real war' FPS games like *Medal Of Honor*, *Call Of Duty* et al.

Unfortunately, Sony's efforts to keep as much under wraps as possible makes it hard to come up with a judgement on how well all this works at this stage. In fact, because so little is known about the actual gameplay mechanics of *Killzone*, much of the early publicity has centred on the game's distinctive, distinctly PC-standard visuals (although we'll be surprised if these shots don't turn out to be enhanced renders). A muted palette of greys, browns and mint greens gives *Killzone* a look like no other FPS. This game looks mature, but it also looks like the developer has managed to extract an awful lot of the PS2's notoriously elusive power. At the heart of this is a graphics engine which has reputedly been two years in the making; it's enabled the implementation of some impressive smoke and lighting effects, all adding to the game's stark and foreboding atmosphere.

Admittedly, early footage to sneak out of Guerrilla's Amsterdam studios depicts a game that's in desperate need of optimisation – the frame rate is currently below playable standards and there are few enemies on screen at any one time, in spite of some impressive background action and effects. But with the promise of advanced AI both in your enemies and allies, and an online mode to kick start the PS2's disparate Network Play service, *Killzone* is likely to be one of the most exciting and important PlayStation2 games of the year.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Holland
PUBLISHER: SCEE
DEVELOPER: Guerrilla Games
RELEASE: Sept '04
GENRE: FPS
PLAYERS: 1-TBA

The future, and an Earth colony has been invaded by the facist-style Helghast. It's you against the world time, baby. And it's the PS2's *Halo*, if you're willing to believe the hype…

CLEVERER THAN MOST

A crucial aspect of *Killzone* is the AI. *Halo* showed what a difference believable AI can make, but *Killzone* is aiming even higher. Not only will the game have you facing off against waves of (potentially) intelligent enemies, but you're also working with three squad members who'll fight independently of your control. This has been tried before with varying degrees of success, so will your comrades *really* engage the enemy? If the AI works then it could be *Killzone*'s defining feature.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Formerly known as Lost Boys, Guerilla Games was founded in 2000 as the result of a merger between three smaller Dutch developers. The company is based in the heart of Amsterdam, employs 85 people and is also currently developing *Shellshock: 'Nam 67*, due to be published by Eidos this summer.

HISTORY

- ■ **SHELLSHOCK: NAM '67** 2004 [PlayStation2]
- ■ **KNIGHTS** 2002 [PlayStation2]
- ■ **CALL OF THE DRAGONFLY** Unreleased [Xbox]

■ The Helghast have so far been revealed in two flavours – the marine type (with helmets) and these bald-headed guys who pack a nasty punch.

■ These WWI-inspired marines are more grounded in reality than *Halo*'s kill-happy enemies.

"THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR SQUAD CAN NEVER BE UNDERESTIMATED AS ONLY TOGETHER CAN YOU SURVIVE"

SCEE PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

IT HAD BETTER BE GOOD…

OUTER SPACE + PROPER WAR + OOH, CLEVER = KILLZONE

KING OF FIGHTERS: MAXIMUM IMPACT



Many of the most well-known characters from the *KOF* series appear here – 14 in total, if you're counting.

SNK TRIES TO FIX WHAT EVERYONE ELSE KNOWS ISN'T BROKEN

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: SNK
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: 14 Sept
GENRE: Beat-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-2

SNK takes its fighting franchise into the third dimension.

If you were here with us right now, looking us square in the eye, you'd be able to tell that we were worried – the furrowed look on our brows is a bit of a giveaway. But while we'd like to blame our fretting on interesting personal problems or stress at work, the truth is that we just can't get our heads around SNK's latest project. Yes, so we're as excited as the next man that there's another *King Of Fighters* game in the works… but in 3D? Call us cynical, but the alarm bells are already ringing.

Admittedly, the concept seems relatively sound on paper – not least because a new *KOF* game is always something to get people interested – although by the same token, it doesn't appear to offer anything other than what every other 3D fighting game has today. Multiple modes including Versus, Survival and Training? Check. Fully three-dimensional movement for all characters, including side-stepping abilities and four different jump moves? Certainly. A selection of 24 fighters (14 of whom

"SNK IS AIMING FOR SOUL CALIBUR II TERRITORY, BUT THIS LOOKS RATHER LIKE STREET FIGHTER EX TO US"

return from previous *KOF* games), each with their own special attacks, combo moves and the ability to fling their opponents into the air with the new Knock Back Attack feature? Most definitely. It seems as though *KOF: Maximum Impact* has all the necessary features to deliver at least some semblance of a solid 3D beat-'em-up and, to be fair, SNK's long-standing experience in the field of fighting games does at least give it a chance of success.

Unfortunately, while SNK is no doubt trying to compete with the likes of Namco and SEGA, we can't help but feel that the *KOF* series really isn't suited to the confines of 3D, in the same way that *Street Fighter* failed to meet everyone's expectations. It probably won't contain hundreds of moves for each character as *Virtua Fighter* does, a plethora of unlockable weapons like *Soul Calibur* or even have a quirky gimmick like *Bloody Roar* – so where's the appeal?

An over-reliance on the *KOF* legacy might prove foolish for SNK, especially as there's a chance that the fans will reject a move into 3D while newcomers won't see anything special over the competition. Obviously, we'd love to be proved wrong, and with the game not due until September there's still time to avert any potential disasters…



The character models look sound enough, but it's a real change of direction from the traditional SNK style.

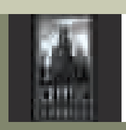

eMag

CITY OF HEROES



Joining other heroes whose powers complement your own can make your team formidable.

Create the character you secretly always wanted to be, or just the most unlikely hero around.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Cryptic Studios was founded in the summer of 2000 when a trio of former Atari employees joined forces with two members of the traditional role-playing industry to begin work on ambitious MMORPG project *City Of Heroes*. Announced in September 2001, the game's publishing rights were quickly snapped up by genre specialist NCsoft.

HISTORY

CITY OF HEROES IS THE FIRST GAME BY CRYPTIC STUDIOS

STAND BACK SUPERMAN, ICEMAN, SPIDER-MAN; BATMAN AND ROBIN TOO…

If a person's favourite superhero supposedly offers a telltale insight into their deepest subconscious desires, what better form for your online alter ego than a custom-built super-being of your very own design? Enticingly, Cryptic Studios' imaginative slant on the traditional MMORPG template allows players to piece together the comic-book hero of their dreams from a mind-boggling selection of variables and special powers, before unleashing their crime-fighting creation on the scum-ridden streets of Paragon City. The sheer number of possibilities the character construction process permits should give rise to a universe populated by thousands of unique avengers of evil, each providing a revealing window into the inner regions of their architect's psyche and, more to the point, throwing up some mouth-watering gameplay possibilities.

With a generous allocation of six characters per account, there's ample licence to experiment with the hero-design system and give yourself as diverse a palette of daring do-gooders to play around with as possible. Yet in a town where so many other spandex-clad crusaders are competing for a share of the limelight with their heroic deeds, chances are you'll want to focus on making a name for just one of your creations, and what better way to begin than by taking to the streets as the most outlandishly conspicuous superhuman around?

The first decision you must make concerns your character's background – are they the product of mutation, science, technology, magic or simply the work of Mother Nature? Secondly, and arguably more significantly, you must specify the basic hero archetype to which they belong. Each archetype determines the core pools from which you can select primary and secondary power sets, and ultimately the specific superhuman abilities your hero can call upon whenever mankind is threatened.

The Blaster archetype will see your character specialising in ranged combat, while the Scrapper will be in their element when it comes to close-quarters fisticuffs. Then there's the attacking and defensive might of the powerhouse Tanker; the invaluable defensive, evasive and healing skills of the Defender; and finally the Controller who gets to pick from a broad choice of more mysterious powers ranging from weather manipulation to telekinesis.

From here it's on to narrowing down those all-important special powers. The Blaster, for instance, must select a power set for their primary ranged ability such as electricity, ice or flame, before eventually choosing from the list of available abilities. Your hero's gender, height and physical build can then be decided, prior to the immensely entertaining task of costume design where you can really set them apart from the crowd.

Being an RPG, your starting powers are only the tip of the iceberg in terms of those you can develop as your character grows. As well as unlocking more devastating abilities from your power set, a pool of more general powers like Flight and Super Speed allows for endless diversification. Progress also determines the calibre of villain you'll meet, as you work your way up from cleansing the streets of common thugs to undertaking missions where the future of humanity is at stake. It'll certainly make a nice change from all that goblin slaying…

“WHAT BETTER FORM FOR YOUR ONLINE ALTER EGO THAN YOUR OWN SUPERHERO?”

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: NCsoft
DEVELOPER: Cryptic Studios
RELEASE: TBA (US: Out Now)
GENRE: MMORPG
PLAYERS: Massively Multiplayer

Step into the tights of your own unique superhero and put your powers to work on the crime-ridden streets of Paragon City.

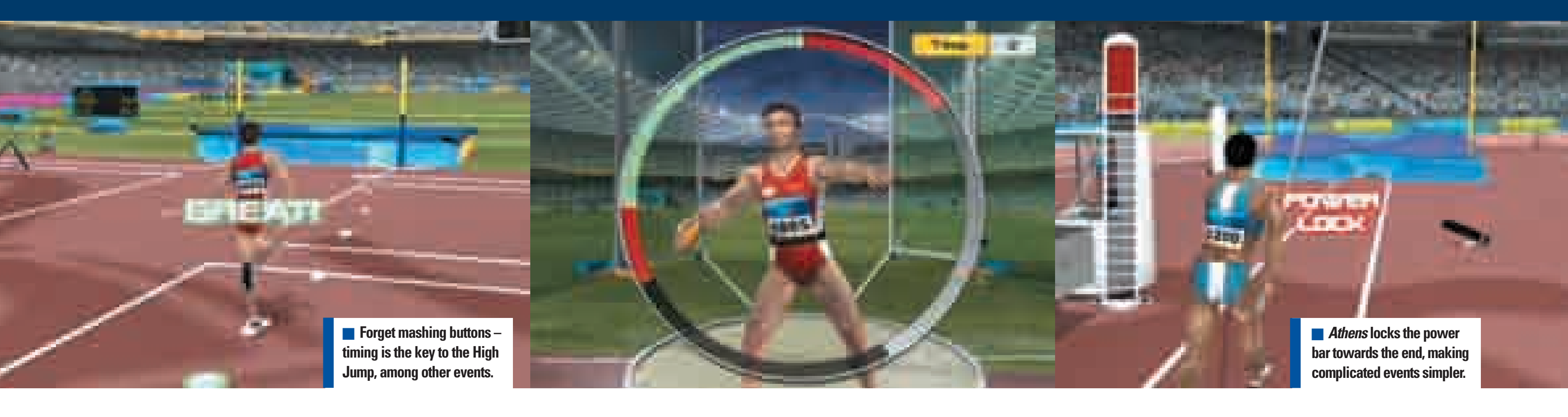
SAFETY IN NUMBERS

Enjoying the use of devastating superpowers from the outset, your character is more than a match for Paragon's typical lowlifes but wouldn't last two minutes against the city's more deadly supervillains. Even the most experienced superhero wouldn't be foolish enough to attempt the more advanced missions without a little help. Superteams will be a common sight in the game as players join forces to combine their diverse special powers against the enemy. Intriguingly, an innovative Sidekick system allows new players to team up with veteran peacekeepers and brave the most dangerous areas of town under the wing of their mentor in true Batman and Robin style.



With so many customisation options it'll be a while before you come across your lookalike.

ATHENS 2004



Forget mashing buttons – timing is the key to the High Jump, among other events.

Athens locks the power bar towards the end, making complicated events simpler.

NOW YOU CAN GO FOR GOLD WITHOUT HENRY KELLY

DETAILS
FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: SCEE
DEVELOPER: Eurocom
RELEASE: Q2 '04
GENRE: Sports
PLAYERS: 1-4

Tying in with this year's Olympic Games, Sony's title is one of the few traditional 'track and field' titles this generation has seen.

Sport is changing. Just a few years ago, you'd have been able to beat world records and throw projectiles obscene distances just by mashing buttons, but now someone has sat up and contemplated the other options. That someone is Sony, and while *Athens 2004* is a far from revolutionary experience, there are more than enough good ideas (not to mention events) here to make this sports compilation title an almost mandatory inclusion in any collection.

From the off there are 27 available events, the majority of which can be entered by both men and women. These range drastically in both approach and control, so while sprints are the same speed-tapping affair as always, gymnastic events often incorporate rhythm-action elements while most sports rely far more heavily on timing and accuracy than the angles and speeds of old. Sony even goes so far as to turn the Women's Floor Exercises into a *DDR* clone, suggesting use of the dance mat for this and, more amusingly, other events such as the 100m (as we suggested several issues ago…).

> "WORK UP A SWEAT, BREAK WORLD RECORDS AND WIN MEDALS, ALL FROM THE COMFORT OF YOUR SOFA – SWEET"

Real commentators have been drafted in to get an authentic televisual feel which just makes you wonder why we couldn't see a little more effort in the participant department. While still leagues ahead of something like *Galleon*, athletes look decidedly dated, and if it weren't for the silky-smooth animation that ties it all together this could have encountered real problems with Joe Casual. However, movement is often so good that you'll forget just how simple your virtual competitor is and be drawn further into the sports. Victory in the long run, then.

At this stage, the only real problem with the game lies in the balancing. Some events – such as the Vault – are simply far too easy, allowing perfect scores across the board with very little effort, while others, like the solitary Equestrian Challenge, are far too frustrating. At the same time, ingenuity works against the game at times so things like the Endurance Races feel far too cold and distant. Still, with so many events, so much fun to be had, and the ability to turn the most civilised front room into a cuss-riddled gym, *Athens* should be at the helm of multiplayer gaming for the next few months. The multi-billion pounds' worth of sporting events and ads will help too, mind…



Archery is one of the better events, but the *Prince Of Thieves* 'Arrowcam' is missing from the preview code…


eMag

PAPER MARIO 2

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Intelligent Systems
RELEASE: TBA (Japan: Q3 '04, US: Q4 '04)
GENRE: Action RPG
PLAYERS: 1

■ The much-rumoured GameCube sequel finally makes an appearance. And this time it might actually get some attention…

NINTENDO'S TUBBY HERO RETURNS FOR MORE WAFER-THIN HAMMERING

You'd forgiven for thinking that Nintendo has endless resources that enable it to work on umpteen different titles at once, but it's become increasingly obvious that this isn't the case. Take *Paper Mario 2*, for example. It was started, unofficially, many years ago. However, Nintendo woke up one day and realised that it had to release some games that would actually sell, so it dragged Intelligent Systems off the project and charged it with the development of *Advance Wars*, and then *Metroid Fusion*. Instead of finding another team (or, God forbid, hiring some new people) Nintendo waited for these GBA classics to be finished before giving IS the go-ahead to work on *Paper Mario 2*. And so, all these years after *Paper Mario*'s return was rumoured, we get to see the first screenshots.

For those of you who missed out on the final trickle of N64 titles, *Paper Mario* took the form of an action RPG, with the selling point being that all the characters in the game were paper-thin – so thin in fact, that if they turned sideways they disappeared. Mario and pals explored the pseudo-3D, side-scrolling world while talking to characters and solving the mystery of (surprise) Peach's shock abduction. We hate to imply that Nintendo can't think of any new storylines, but, well, this is also the storyline for *Paper Mario 2*.

The gameplay changes when Mario gets into a fight, at which point the action becomes decidedly turn-based. Players choose from a command menu and must combine a command selection with timed button presses to pull off a successful attack. Throughout the game Mario can use gold coins to buy 'badges' from shops, giving him new abilities. Coins are yielded by defeated enemies, or won in the game's mini-games (of which there are many, à la *Mario Party*). Early screenshots showcase a few of them, with the most entertaining being the screenshot of Bowser running through a level avoiding his own goons. Very simple, we'll admit, but if there are enough of these games they'll succeed in breaking up the exploration/turn-based fighting gameplay.

Other changes include a reliance on audience participation in the battles. Most encounters take place on a stage, and the audience will cheer and clap depending on how well-timed your attacks are. The more public approval you get, the more your power bar fills up. Another change comes in the form of the shape-shifting Mario. The flat hero can turn sideways to fit through gaps, roll into a scroll to bounce out of trouble, or turn into a paper aeroplane in order to glide across gaps.

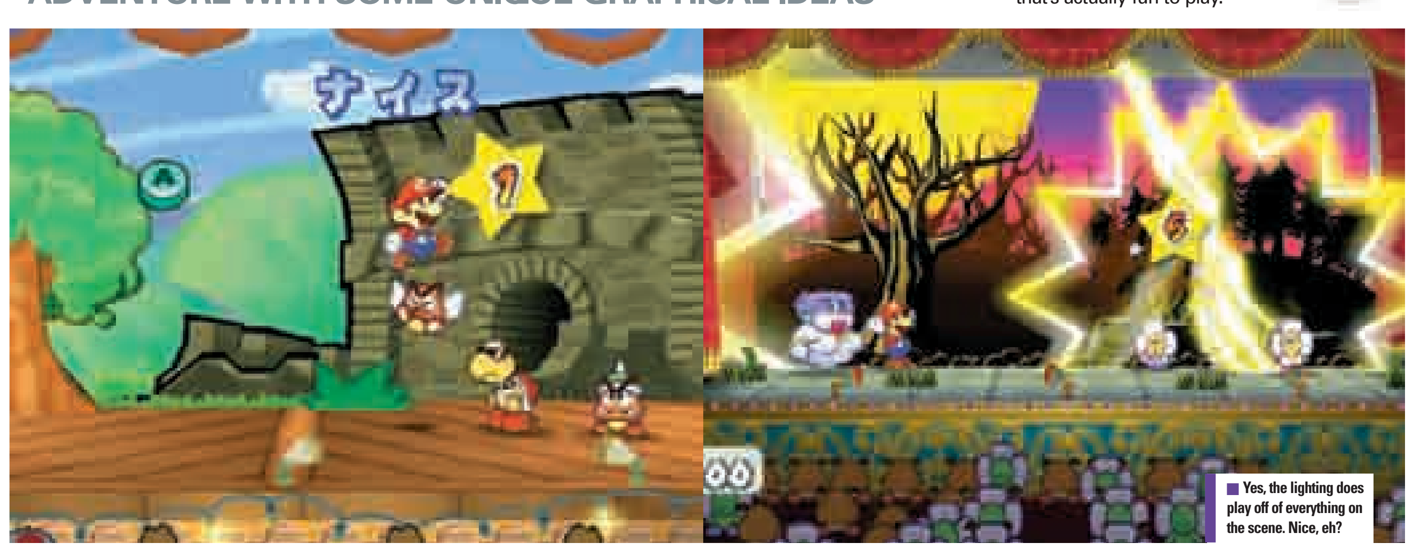
With *Paper Mario 2* you can expect a pleasantly different style of adventure that makes use of some unique graphical ideas. In that area at least, Nintendo has excelled. The textures, lighting and overall style are lush, and in some fights Mario is taking on around 40 enemies at once. Despite the battles being quite simple there are magic attacks, and it's these spells (courtesy of the Lightning Rod, Flame Rod and so on) that have allowed IS to show off in the lighting department. The effects play off every one of the characters, and there are moments when you'll simply be blown away.

At a time when companies are still trying to push graphical boundaries with no thought for already-stretched gameplay ideals, it's going to be nice to sit down with something that's actually fun to play.

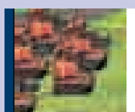
FLATLINING

Nintendo is definitely a fan of the pseudo 3D genre right now, and when you can do it this well you may as well flaunt it. We'd much rather play a beautiful 2D game with dozens of enemies on the screen, than the most realistic game we've ever seen that has, ooh, five enemies on screen (maybe the next *Doom* title could be developed by Nintendo…). It seems that *Four Swords+* and *Paper Mario 2* are sharing very similar technology, which has allowed Nintendo to be far more expressive. It's strange when you think about it: surely the way to make something more expressive would be to make as complex a model as possible, thus letting you mould every aspect of its body. Still, this system works, so we're not complaining.

"YOU CAN EXPECT A PLEASANTLY DIFFERENT STYLE OF ADVENTURE WITH SOME UNIQUE GRAPHICAL IDEAS"



■ Yes, the lighting does play off of everything on the scene. Nice, eh?



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Intelligent Systems is Nintendo's premier internal development department that is better known for handling recent GBA titles such as *Metroid Fusion* and *Advance Wars 2*. In the past, though, it was responsible for *Paper Mario*, so it only makes sense that it would bring us the sequel.

HISTORY

- **ADVANCE WARS 2** 2003 [Game Boy Advance]
- **METROID FUSION** 2003 [Game Boy Advance]
- **PAPER MARIO** 2000 [Nintendo 64]

■ There are some beautifully stylish moments, such as wading through these flowers.

"AT A TIME WHEN COMPANIES ARE TRYING TO PUSH GRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES WITH NO THOUGHT FOR STRETCHED GAMEPLAY IDEALS, THIS IS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR"

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

THE ORIGAMI OF PAPER MARIO 2

MARIO RPG + MARIO PARTY 5 x ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS = PAPER MARIO 2

■ Luigi has to make an appearance doesn't he, really?

ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE



The opening CG movie is almost worth the entry fee alone. Remember that PSone *Soul Blade* CG movie? It's better than that.

Jacques' trusty whip can be used to grab enemies, then he can either throw them or shoot them with his pistol.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

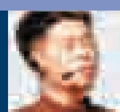
LAST TANGO IN PARIS

THE LAST SAMURAI ÷ THE TERMINATOR + RESIDENT EVIL = ONIMUSHA 3

"SCINTILLATING GRAPHICS AND A DRAMATIC SOUNDTRACK… IMMEDIATELY DRAW YOU INTO THE HEART OF ONIMUSHA'S MAGICAL WORLD"
CAPCOM PRESS RELEASE

ONIMUSHA 3: DEMON SIEGE

PLAYSTATION2



PRODUCER PROFILE

■ **Keiji Inafune, *Onimusha 3*'s producer, began working for Capcom in 1987 as the character designer for *Mega Man*. He is now general manager of the company's Production Studio 2 development arm. He has produced *Onimusha: Warlords*, *Onimusha 2* and has been involved in some way with every Mega Man game ever released.**

HISTORY

- **ONIMUSHA 2: SAMURAI'S DESTINY** 2002 [PS2]
- **ONIMUSHA: WARLORDS** 2000 [PS2]
- **MEGA MAN** 1987 [NES]



■ Claire is one of the peripheral characters – she's Jacques' fianceé and, coincidentally, in the army. Handy, that.

TIME TRAVELLING AND JEAN RENO? THE FINAL ONIMUSHA GAME IS FULL OF SURPRISES

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom Europe
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: July '04 (Japan/US: Out now)
GENRE: Action/Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

■ The final instalment of the super-budgeted and popular samurai-slashing, demon-busting *Resident Evil* spin-off is here.

PS2 **Okay, pay attention, this is going to get complicated.** *Onimusha 3* begins as Samanosuke is approaching his final battle with Nobunaga Oda, the demon lord who has Japan in his grasp. He confronts Nobunaga and is defeated, but then a portal opens up and transports Samanosuke to Paris, 2004. Coincidentally (or not, as it turns out) this is the exact same time that Paris is under attack from the Genma scientist Guildenstern and his Genma hordes. Cut to Jacques Blanc (Jean Reno) fending off the demons with only a sub-machine gun and his Gallic flair. But then, quelle horreur, Jacques is sucked into the portal and dumped back in 16th Century Japan… ten days before Samanosuke is due to meet Nobunaga.

This background is important because it's the story that drives *Onimusha 3*. In particular, though, the time-travelling aspect of the game also enables a few interesting plot and gameplay twists. It turns out our heroes aren't simply linked by their quest to defeat Nobunaga but also by a fairy named Ako. She can be used to exchange items between the characters – a vital aspect when both protagonists find themselves in the same location but 500 years apart – and the subsequent character and item switching is very reminiscent of *Resident Evil Zero*.

As in the two previous games, Genma Souls (dropped by defeated enemies) can be absorbed and then used to upgrade weaponry and armour. It's a primitive experience points system but it works well given the fluid nature of the game. Combat also flows and has a surprising amount of verve. Using one attack button it's possible to pull off some spectacular combos, but with the introduction of shoulder-button combos a lot more is possible. Jacques can use his whip-style weapons to trap enemies and throw them, causing damage to any others they might hit. Once an enemy has been imobilised he can also perform a neat move, firing his pistol into the trapped enemy. The whip can also be used to throw rocks and swing across environments.

Likewise, Samanosuke's swords have more than a few combos. Good timing with the defend and attack buttons will result in a critical attack which will instantly kill all but the most hardy of foes. And he's got his bow and arrow (with different power arrows: ice, fire and electricity) for fighting at long range. It's a good job that the combat is so interesting because there are a lot of things to fight.

Unlike *Resident Evil*, the game that spawned the the *Onimusha* series, the emphasis here is on defeating enemies rather than being scared by them. In this way *Onimusha 3* has more in common with *Devil May Cry* than 'that game with the zombies'. Yet it still can't completely divorce itself from Mikami-san's seminal horror game. Simple puzzles are the cornerstone of the genre – you won't find anything more complicated than a find-the-key or basic logic puzzle here – but it serves to mix things up a bit and give you a break from hammering that Square button.

Capcom has clearly spent a fortune on *Onimusha 3*. The fee for Reno's face (but not his voice) must have been huge, and the opening FMV by legendary Japanese producer ROBOT is reputedly the most expensive in-game CG movie ever – it certainly looks the business. And with a few twists on the well-established plot and gameplay mechanics of the genre, *Onimusha 3* will be a fittingly extravagant end to the series.

A FAIRY'S TALE

One of the more interesting aspects of *Onimusha 3* is the character Ako, a fairy. She not only brings some light relief to the game but is also vital for your progression. She acts a bit like Link's fairy friend in *Zelda*, pointing out things of interest, targeting enemies and even bringing unreachable objects to Jacques or Samanosuke. Ako can also be upgraded. Equipping her with coloured vests (once the vests themselves have been suitably enhanced with jewels) will imbue her with powers. She can be used to help you absorb Genma Souls more quickly, turn all Genma Souls into the red type (used to level up weapons and armour) or act as a healer.

"WITH A FEW TWISTS IN THE PLOT AND THE GAMEPLAY, ONIMUSHA 3 WILL BE A FITTINGLY EXTRAVAGANT END TO THE SERIES"

RATCHET & CLANK 3

RATCHET AND CLANK BRING THE FIREPOWER, YOU BRING THE FRIENDS

DETAILS
FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: SCEE
DEVELOPER: Insomniac Games
RELEASE: Nov '04 (US: Q4 '04)
GENRE: Platform
PLAYERS: 1 (1-8 online)

■ Ratchet and Clank return for their third outing, armed with new weapons such as the Infector Gun and a promising multiplayer mode

PS2 **'Social gaming' appears to be the latest catchphrase in gaming, and as with previous mots du jour such as stealth and cel-shading, it's cropping up in peculiar places.** Multiplayer isn't the obvious next step in Ratchet and Clank's evolution yet Insomniac Games has enough faith in social gaming to include split-screen and an eight-player online mode. It may seem a strange addition to a series traditionally seen as platform game first, shooter second, but having tried the multiplayer modes, it makes perfect sense.

Online or using system link, two teams of four players attempt to capture their opponents' base. This is achieved by destroying the four automatic gun turrets surrounding the base and then warping into the base itself – an objective that's easier said than done thanks to the durability and hostility of these turrets. Aiding the player are mini-robot drones, controllable gun turrets and gravity boots, allowing you to walk upside down in metal tunnels or along walls. There are vehicles to use as well, with the two-man tank (one driving, one shooting) and fighter ship being just two of the confirmed alternatives to running on foot. Destructible environments also add an unexpected tactical element – destroying bridges may stop tank onslaughts but is it worth compromising assaults of your own? Platforming elements from the main game also make a subtle impact on how each match pans out, thanks to side-routes and secret areas in the levels that require deft use of the Grapple Hook.

The emphasis on weapons means the series' transition to the online area shouldn't be too bumpy, and even at this early stage the gameplay mechanics and intelligent level design look set to lend themselves to taut pacing. The balance of the multiplayer weapons isn't quite there yet, but there's plenty of time for such issues to be rectified. Likewise, some spit and polish is needed for the four-player split-screen mode. It's increasingly rare to see PlayStation2 games catering for four players huddled around a single TV but it feels a little too scaled-down in its present state.

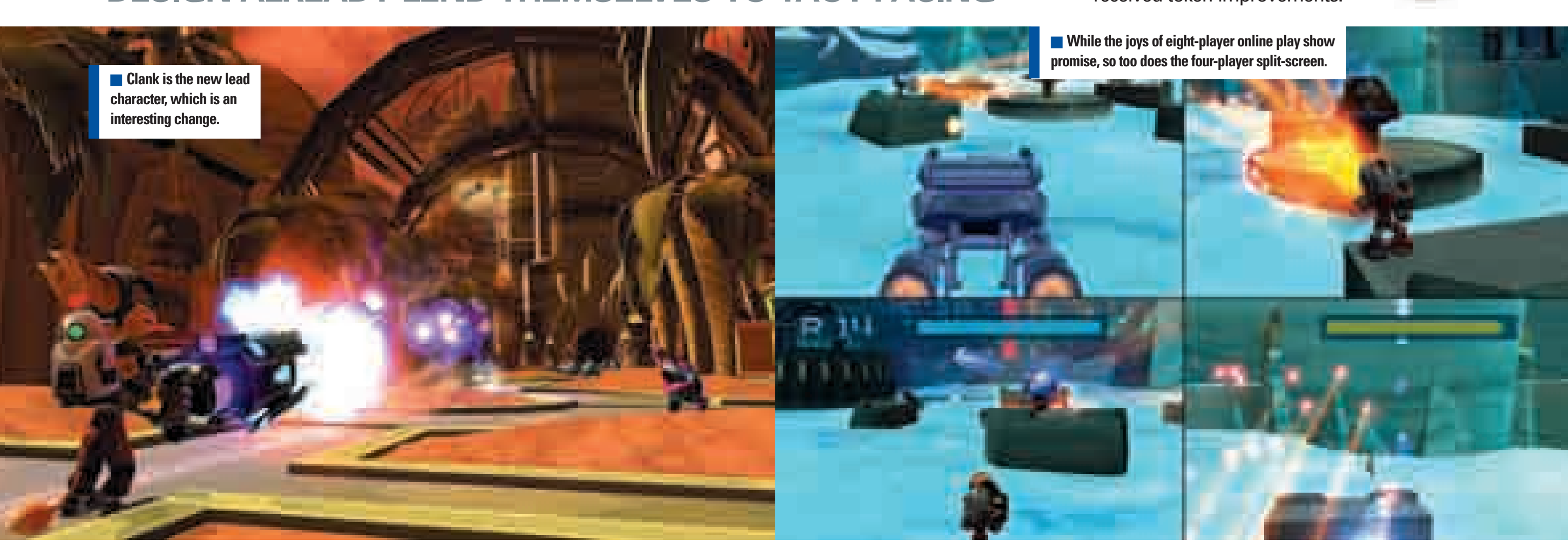
With all the fuss surrounding the multiplayer it's easy to forget that there's an all-new single-player adventure too, but so far it's hard to escape the feeling that this will be a customary run-through of the sequel checklist – bigger, bolder and hopefully better. The storyline sees a role reversal with Ratchet demoted to sidekick while Clank takes the lead, having earned himself a television show as Secret Agent Clank. It's an unusual move to demote the main protagonist in terms of narrative, and with Ratchet and Clank both playable at different points in the game it'll be interesting to see if Clank's bigger role does steal the limelight from Ratchet.

Fans will be pleased to see that old weapons now have multiple upgrades while new firepower has been introduced, reflecting the added emphasis on gunplay. The latest additions to Ratchet's arsenal include the Infector (which turns enemies on each other), a Plasma Whip and the Refractor that deflects laser beams. These additions to the main game are nice but it's worrying that the single-player mode appears to be somewhat overlooked. With Insomniac Games adding multiplayer modes to a genre that traditionally caters for the sole gamer, it would be a shame if the main adventure only received token improvements.

UNDER THE INFLUENCE

Ratchet & Clank 3 **makes plenty of winking references to contemporary culture and includes a cluster of knowing in-jokes, such as the congratulatory "All your base are belong to red" message that appears following a successful base capture in multiplayer. It's also hard to argue that tuxedo-wearing Secret Agent Clank is anything but a nod to James Bond, as we first meet him in a casino complete with all the digital suave charm a robot can muster and typically awful one-liners. With returning characters such as Captain Qwark and playing with the new dynamic of Clank as the lead character, this latest outing looks to retain the warm humour that's emblematic of the series.**

"THE GAMEPLAY MECHANICS AND INTELLIGENT LEVEL DESIGN ALREADY LEND THEMSELVES TO TAUT PACING"



■ Clank is the new lead character, which is an interesting change.

■ While the joys of eight-player online play show promise, so too does the four-player split-screen.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Having celebrated its tenth anniversary in March this year, Insomniac Games is firmly established as one of the top independent developers for the PlayStation2. Its best known works are the *Spyro* series and, of course, the *Ratchet & Clank* franchise.

HISTORY

- **RATCHET & CLANK 2** 2003 [PlayStation2]
- **RATCHET & CLANK** 2002 [PlayStation2]
- **SPYRO THE DRAGON** 1998 [PlayStation]

■ The Refractor Gun can be used to deflect laser beams and must be used to solve some puzzles.

"THIS WILL HAVE THE SAME IMPACT AS MARIO 64 ON CHARACTER ACTION GAMES"

BRIAN ALLGEIER, DESIGN DIRECTOR, INSOMNIAC GAMES

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SHAKEN, STIRRED, SECRET AND SOCIAL

SIDEKICK RATCHET + SECRET AGENT CLANK x SOCIAL GAMING = RATCHET & CLANK 3

■ As usual, there'll be the tricky jumps to master throughout the game alongside the shooting.

■ The battle system has had a revamp thanks to some new controls.

MERCENARIES



VIDEOGAMES MATHS

IF IT MOVES...

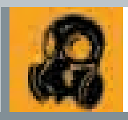
GTA + WAR x CASH = MERCENARIES

You want bleak, war-torn desolation? You got it. The visuals and sound effects are top-notch.

"MERCENARIES WILL GIVE GAMERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE OUT THEIR ACTION MOVIE FANTASIES"
ACTIVISION PRESS RELEASE

You'll come across other factions during your missions, but it's up to you if you want to work with or against them.





DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ Pandemic is the studio of the moment, with three high-profile titles in development. Based in the US, Pandemic is soon to deliver *Full Spectrum Warrior* for Xbox and *Star Wars Battlefront* for PS2 and Xbox. Who's been a studio full of busy boys, then?

HISTORY

■ **STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS** 2003 [PlayStation2]
■ **ARMY MEN RTS** 2002 [PlayStation2]
■ **DARK REIGN II** 2000 [PC]

CASH FOR NO QUESTIONS ASKED…

How many times has the earth been saved from nuclear attack? Anyone who reads the slightest amount of truth in videogames wouldn't sleep a wink, wondering what will happen if Hero X runs out of lives and fails to prevent the imminent radioactive winter masterminded by Villain Y. But at a time when developers are under increasing pressure to formulate fresh ways for players to save the planet, it speaks volumes for Pandemic that all three of its world-rescuing titles are receiving so much attention right now.

Mercenaries is the surprise element in the Pandemic, er, pandemic that seems to be sweeping the games industry. The free-roaming third-person war title is surprisingly advanced in development and has been turning plenty of heads. Stealing some of the finer concepts from the recent *GTA* titles, *Mercenaries* is a totally open-ended combat game set in North Korea where a military coup has started to give the rest of the world some sleepless nights. You guessed it, nuclear war is on the horizon and there are only a select few who are up to the task of preventing it. The player will be given the pick of three mercenaries, all of who conform to such cringe-worthy stereotypes it's a wonder the rest of the game is considered so innovative. There's an all-round American hero, a burly Swedish male, and a lithe British girlie – one for each territory this game is setting its sales sights on.

"THIS GAME IS SHAPING UP TO BE ANYTHING BUT ORDINARY"

However, this is where the 'seen it, done it' attitude should be discarded, as the remainder of the game is shaping up to be anything but ordinary. As has been mentioned, *Mercenaries* is free-roaming, and this is no half-hearted boast by the publisher. Walk anywhere on the massive maps, pick up any weapon you find, commandeer vehicles, call in air strikes, shoot down helicopters, destroy any building – there really is a sense of freedom here that has never been implemented to such a degree in any war game. Ever.

In fact, as a hired killer, there is no onus on the player to achieve anything other than the final execution of 52 key figures in the nuclear conspiracy. Sure, there will be other factions involved in combat within the various demilitarised zones in which the game is set, but the choice of befriending or making an enemy out of them will be at your discretion. Whereas NATO peacekeeping forces may have the better soldiers to help you out in the occasional scrap, the Russian Mafia, for example, might be able to locate some superior weapons – for a price.

Mercenaries could be a real gameplay gem: a true testament to the creative abilities of studios familiar with the limits and potential of current hardware. The visuals and sound effects are already proving that Pandemic knows its way around Sony and Microsoft's development tools as *Mercenaries* is looking stunning. The massive environments are stuffed with the smaller details that set war games apart from each other, and the Skywalker sound effects are superb. Forget trying to perfect the hum of a Lightsaber, it now seems that LucasArts is allowing its developers to use George's awesome technology to make their games serious contenders in today's aggressive market.

Throw in the Havok physics engine for good measure and it's obvious that *Mercenaries* has had plenty of triple-A quality input, making it one of the brightest prospects for this autumn. Unless, of course, you're a pacifist…

DEALING DEATH

It's not yet known exactly how many levels and objectives there will be in *Mercenaries*, but Pandemic has said there will be 52 targets on which the Mercenary will be able to collect bounty. These main objectives are all based on playing cards and as such run from the first target – the two of hearts – all the way up to the kingpin, the ace of spades. The player will be able to collect bounty from these 'wanted men' to spend on some of the weaponry and vehicles available. However, much like the *GTA* series, the player will be able to acquire weapons by killing other soldiers and by undertaking sub-missions for the other factions that appear in the game. It seems unlikely that *Mercenaries* will be a one-afternoon wonder…

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Activision
DEVELOPER: Pandemic
RELEASE: Q3 '04 (Japan: TBC, US: Q3 '04)
GENRE: Shoot-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1

■ Kill for money in North Korea, where the threat of nuclear war has raised its ugly head once again.



■ Those pesky North Koreans are keen to go postal on a global scale. And it's up to you to stop them. Alone. Bummer.

CUSTOM ROBO: BATTLE REVOLUTION



■ Try as it might, Nintendo's kiddy image just won't budge…

■ Before each bout you're given a detailed breakdown on each of your opponents. Yes, even this bunny thing.

DETAILS

FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: Noise
RELEASE: Q3 '04 (Japan: Out Now)
GENRE: Action RPG
PLAYERS: 1-4

■ It's an adventure-based exercise in robots beating the hell out of one another with all manner of explosives. *Battle Revolution* may not live up to its title but it sure is fun…

I'M THE OPERATOR OF MY POCKET MUTILATOR

We're starting to get worried about developers at Nintendo. They've given us countless *Pokémon* games that continually sanitise a series of increasingly brutal animal battles with words like 'fainted', yet it's essentially cock fighting for kids. Now they present us with the same principle in robotic form – essentially cock fighting with Digivolved roosters, which is marginally less disturbing. This is a firm, let's not forget, that is constantly slammed by the self-professed 'mature' public for its childish back catalogue, but perhaps there's a much darker side to the Japanese giant than its front end lets on. Either way, what we have before us is a commercially viable and primary coloured interpretation of the usual 'Super-Stompy-Robo-Death-Bot Wars' mecha fare which turns out to be substantially more solid than the majority of its po-faced rivals…

Following a fairly linear narrative, *Custom Robo*'s main mode smacks of pretty much every generic role player you might care to mention. Talk to spiky-haired characters, journey slowly from A to B on a world map and participate in battle after battle to earn new weapons and parts with which to spruce up your digital combat avatar – as it stands, the game feels much more like just a series of battles than any kind of coherent product. While this in itself isn't really a problem, the fact that there's so much 'exploration' (in the loosest possible sense) and conversing with NPCs just makes this area of the game feel tired and redundant. Better integration of the battling and customisation into the story will be an unlikely renovation before the PAL release, but we'll retain hope until launch day – if only because the fights make it worth sitting through all the scripted dialogue and events.

When the battle sequences start, though, it becomes glaringly obvious that this is considered an RPG to the same extent as something like *Zelda* – clearly the prefix 'action' removes practically all of an RPG's reliance on statistics and goblins. Not that we're complaining, as the frantic mech battles are as enjoyable as they are heavily customisable. Pre-clash, you're able to select from a suitably impressive array of parts, guns and rockets which, through their practically infinite permutations, can make for some genuinely tactical and cunning battle rigs. Do you opt for the speedy set-up that relies primarily on agility; the gun-heavy bot that sacrifices special weapons and jumping; or the absolute tank – unstoppably tough and reliant on missiles but with all the manoeuvrability of, well, a tank?

As disjointed as it may be, we still hold an unshakeable soft spot for Noise's technoclash. It's still early days for the PAL release so we'll be sure to follow the progress of *Battle Revolution* as it undergoes the laborious localisation process. As it stands, the game is at least halfway to greatness, and with a little tender loving care we're confident that it could find itself closer still. If only for its fantastically enjoyable battles and multiplayer action, *Custom Robo* wills you to keep it at the back of your mind, and once you've sampled this less embarrassing brother of *Robot Wars* you're likely to see what we mean.

Tight but simple visuals and sound tie the whole package together in a manner that occasionally hints at the series' N64 past but at the same time it just manages to secure its place in next-gen territory. It's far from antiquated but there can be no denying that this could do with a little attention before we get our hands on the finished version…

THE FANTASTIC FOUR

Fill all of the ports on the front of the Cube with controllers and then bestow these upon friends and *Custom Robo* starts to show its real raison d'être. We've easily blown as much time here as in the main quest, but this presents a problem: until you've put sufficient time into the main mode, there simply aren't enough parts available for all four players to use substantially different robots, which can make proceedings lose their appeal quicker than they should. Plug away at it, though, and you'll be able to refine your mechanical partner further with every battle, whittling out the useful parts from the rubbish and eventually creating the ultimate robotic fighter.

"THE FIGHTS THEMSELVES MAKE IT WORTH SITTING THROUGH ALL THE SCRIPTED DIALOGUE AND EVENTS"

DEVELOPER PROFILE



Noise comes under the larger umbrella of Marigul Management within Nintendo, alongside the likes of Clever Trick and Param. The studio was set up to keep lesser and more ambitious titles prevalent in today's big-money business and has put out some great little games in its time.

HISTORY

- **CUSTOM ROBO GX** 2002 [Game Boy Advance]
- **CUSTOM ROBO** 1999 [Nintendo 64]

Variety among arenas is most impressive, but as with everything else they all need to be unlocked.

'Commanders' come in all shapes and sizes but you'll need to beat off all comers.

Your boss gets angry. Then you go somewhere, have a few fights and go back again. And again.

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

UNDER THE BONNET OF CUSTOM ROBO

ROBOT WARS - LAME ROBOTS + DECENT ROBOTS = CUSTOM ROBO: BR

"THROUGH SPECIALISED TRAINING, 'COMMANDERS' LEARN TO MANIPULATE THE ROBOTS' ACTIONS THROUGH THE USE OF BRAIN WAVES"
NINTENDO PRESS RELEASE

XYANIDE



Certain ships may look rather familiar, but let's face it – everything has borrowed from *Star Wars* at one point or another.

NEW-SCHOOL VISUALS, OLD-SCHOOL GAMEPLAY

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, GBA
ORIGIN: Holland
PUBLISHER: Playlogic
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q2 '04
GENRE: Shoot-'Em-Up
PLAYERS: 1-2

Xyanide sees up to two players racing down twisting tunnels and piloting some seriously tooled-up spacecraft. Fans of pretty visuals and retro gameplay are in for a treat.

Traditional shooters seem popular at the moment, and despite its beautiful looks, Playlogic's *Xyanide* is deliciously old-school. Eschewing the more traditional gameplay seen in the likes of *R-Type Final* and *Shikigami no Shiro II*, *Xyanide* opts for the same control system that's been used in hits like *Smash TV* and *Robotron: 2084* – one analogue stick controls your fighter while the other controls your direction of fire. Indeed, *Xyanide*'s closest peer at the moment is Bizarre Creations' *Geometry Wars*, so it will be interesting to see how it compares to *PGR2*'s bonus game.

"ACHINGLY BEAUTIFUL VISUALS COMBINE WITH SOME GOOD OLD-FASHIONED GAMEPLAY TO PRODUCE A PROMISING TITLE"

Rest assured, while *Xyanide*'s gameplay may be decidedly 'old-school' Playlogic has given the game a fresh (albeit monotonous) style to ensure that this title grabs your attention. Granted, all the game takes place in the same twisting tunnels, but the action itself is gloriously realised in all its rendered splendour. Indeed, at certain stages, *Xyanide* looks set to give you a synaptic overload, with the action literally exploding in a kaleidoscope of colours that will make your head spin. The sensory onslaught continues with thumping tunes that perfectly suit the on-screen carnage and is enhanced by *Xyanide* allowing you to listen to your own tracks as you blast the ridiculously tough foes.

Make no mistake, for all its 128-bit looks, *Xyanide* features the sort of hard-as-nails gameplay that we haven't seen since the days of *Defender*. Fortunately, there's a huge array of weaponry to choose from including drones, lightning guns and a screen-detonating nuke. One of the game's most interesting aspects, however, is the fact that your ship can mutate between two distinct forms. The organic mutation features a wave of firepower that's useful for taking out smaller enemies, while the mechanical version fires more concentrated lasers for taking out bigger adversaries. Mutators can be picked up throughout the game and will slowly enhance both ships' firepower, manoeuvrability and armour until they reach formidable levels. With Xbox Live support (in the form of high scores and downloadable content) as well as a satisfying two-player mode, Playlogic is pulling out all the stops to ensure that *Xyanide* is a worthy release. Let's just hope it can balance out the frustrating boss fights and change some of the repetitive level design.



One thing you'll notice about *Xyanide* is how gorgeous it looks – what a shame that it's set in such dull locations.

Every boss we've met is great to look at, but frustratingly difficult to defeat. Not for the faint-hearted.


eMag

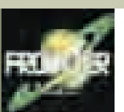
ROLLERCOASTER TYCOON 3



■ Massively advanced AI sees crowds travelling in groups and reacting to events around them.

> "3D GRAPHICS GIVE PLAYERS COMPLETE CONTROL OF VIEWS AROUND THE PARK, AND A FRONT SEAT TO THE ACTION"
> *ATARI PRESS RELEASE*

■ The lush 3D visuals are far removed from the primitive isometric parks we're used to.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

David Braben and Ian Bell began writing definitive space sim *Elite* in 1982 while studying at Cambridge University. The game's success inspired Braben to spend five and a half years creating sequel *Frontier*, which became Europe's best selling game of 1993, before Frontier Developments was incorporated in 1994.

HISTORY

- **DOG'S LIFE** 2003 [PlayStation2]
- **FRONTIER: ELITE II** 1993 [Multiformat]
- **ELITE** 1984 [BBC Micro]



The first-person coaster cam gives you a better idea of how thrilling your creations really are.

FRONTIER PUTS ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR BACK INTO COASTER CREATION

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Atari
DEVELOPER: Frontier Developments
RELEASE: Q4 '04
GENRE: Management
PLAYERS: 1

After a disappointing first sequel, *RollerCoaster Tycoon* finally looks like getting the earth-shattering follow-up it deserves.

For the makers of any hit title the inevitable prospect of having to deliver a sequel that surpasses the colossal expectations set by the original is a daunting task. The more adventurous developer may choose to approach the new project with the ambitious intent of wowing the world all over again, yet, while this strategy has given rise to some tremendous success stories, more and more franchises are taking the 'evolution, not revolution' route advocated by the late Tony Hayers. Take *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* – the original wasn't really broken so Ubisoft didn't go out of its way to fix it, yet managed to improve upon its previous effort by tweaking and building on the solid foundations that were already in place.

Sadly, this seemingly foolproof approach didn't pay off for *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2*. That's not to say the long-awaited sequel wasn't a superb game in its own right, but perhaps the anticlimax was largely due to the original being so wonderfully comprehensive in the first place. When you can instigate a marketing promotion offering concessions on food in your park to get the visitor numbers up, or click on any guest in a crowd of thousands and get a detailed breakdown of their needs, the rides they've been on and every item they've bought, how much further could an evolutionary follow-up take the concept? Now, after a couple of lacklustre expansion packs have fuelled the notion that the series may have indeed hit a ceiling, only a revolution could reverse the saddening stagnation of such a masterpiece. Yet from the mouth-watering glimpses we've had of *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3* that's precisely what fans can expect from this second roll of the sequel dice.

The more observant among you will probably have ascertained by now that this overhaul centres on the game world's lavish transformation from primitive isometric to sumptuous 3D. As inevitable as this move may seem, 3D has been something of a taboo in the genre since the great *Theme Park* left its solid 2D home and lost every bit of its charm in the process. Thankfully, as the pioneer of genuine 3D gaming with *Elite* back in 1984, David Braben's Frontier Developments technically has had more practice in the art than anyone else.

If the team is successful in bringing the magic of previous games to life within the 3D sphere the immersion factor is set to go through the roof, yet far from merely adding aesthetic enrichment the introduction of a fully 3D perspective should be of immense practical benefit. Easily the most frustrating element of *RT2* was the near impossibility of constructing advanced park architecture using the restricted isometric view, whereas the new framework will obviously grant players free rein where camera angles are concerned. The ability to actually ride your gravity-defying creations in first person is also put to good use, as players are no longer forced to rely wholly on advanced g-force graphs and velocity calculations to judge a coaster's intensity but can experience it for themselves.

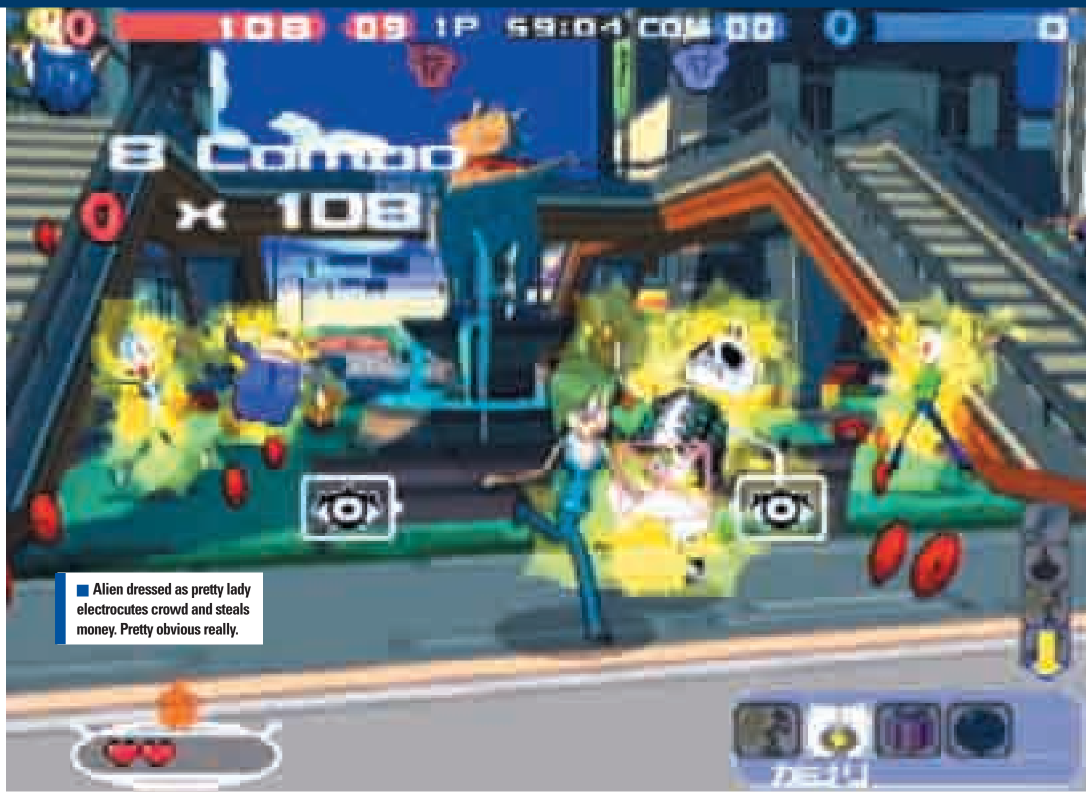
If the visual overhaul and host of proposed improvements manage to come together for Frontier and series kingpin Chris Sawyer, *RollerCoaster Tycoon 3* should provide the much-needed rush of adrenaline to give the genre an astounding second wind.

ALL ABOUT THE CUSTOMER

Constantly calculating the needs and activities of thousands of guests in *RollerCoaster Tycoon 2* was an impressive enough feat, but Frontier plans to introduce a whole new level of authentic guest behaviour and take full advantage of the added visual details. Diversity in appearance is most immediately evident and, for the first time, punters' age will be apparent, placing greater focus on your park's appeal to particular demographics than ever before. Most significantly, visitors will now travel around the park in groups as they would in reality, forcing players to cater for the needs of families and gangs of friends rather than individuals.

> "ONLY A REVOLUTIONARY OVERHAUL COULD REVERSE THE STAGNATION OF SUCH A MASTERPIECE"

PANIC MAKER



■ Alien dressed as pretty lady electrocutes crowd and steals money. Pretty obvious really.

CALLING OCCUPANTS OF INTERPLANETARY CRAFT

PS2 **Oh, how treacherous the life of a developer has become, stuck between trying to avoid milking the many stagnating gaming genres, concepts and elements and producing something that will appeal to a wide enough audience for it to be commercially viable.** So it's with a great sense of admiration that we approach anything that even remotely challenges convention – and a minute-long video of *Panic Maker* was all it took for us to get on the phone and find out a) just what the hell was going on and b) exactly when we'd get to play it.

Both answers came relatively quickly and simply. *Panic Maker* is best likened to Shiny's massively ambitious *Messiah* in that your 'naked' character won't last two seconds in the game world but by imitating native life (read: people) you can disguise your extra-terrestrial activities. You see, as an alien you'll be the centre of attention for an angry/curious/besotted (delete as applicable) mob in seconds and so the game's basic premise requires you to copy various people as a front for your mission. Which, it would appear, involves collecting coins. Hmm. Regardless, there are all manner of gadgets on hand to make tormenting humans that much more enjoyable. Bombs are a great way of clearing crowds, electrocuting the masses causes a mass coin exodus, and making annoying noises is, well, just annoying.

Already the comparisons are flying in – *Jet Set Radio* for the visuals, *State Of Emergency* for the massive crowds and the aforementioned *Messiah* for the basic premise – but the whole package is sufficiently unique to leave a lasting impression. Multiplayer modes will bring added confusion and enjoyment in equal measures, and with the right promotion this is the kind of title that can quickly develop a cult following.

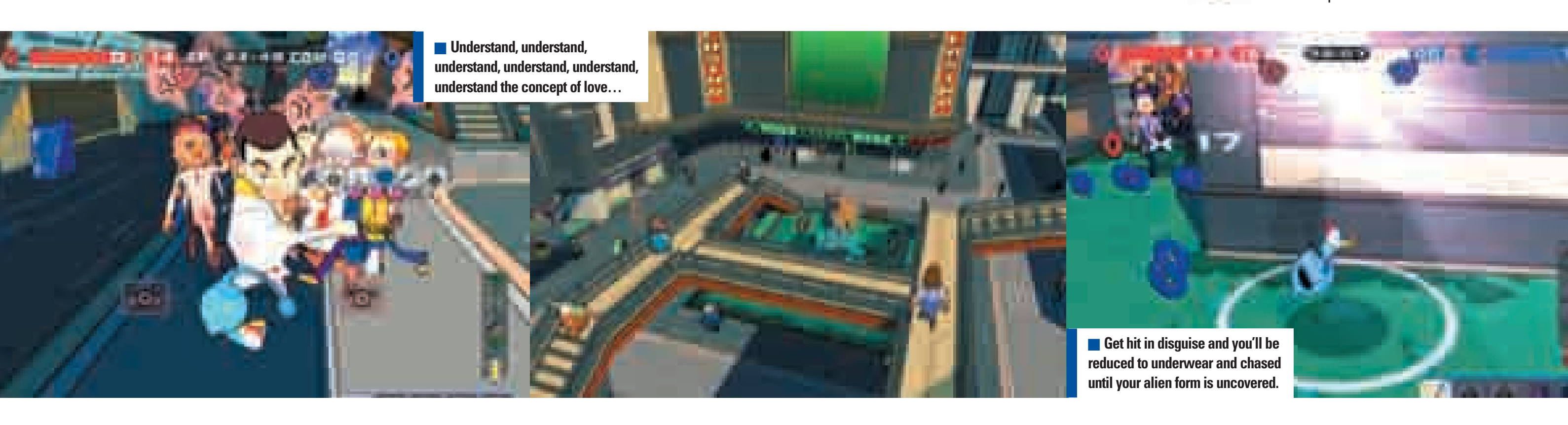
If nothing else, *Panic Maker* will offer a light-hearted, colourful and frantic take on the stealth genre, and while many in the sneaky world are waiting on the return of Solid Snake while they play *Pandora Tomorrow* on Live, we can only hope that an enlightened few find room in their hearts for *Panic Maker*.

> "WHAT'S SO WRONG ABOUT LIKING THE IDEA OF BRINGING DOWN THE HUMAN RACE FROM THE INSIDE?"

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Capcom
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: TBC (Japan: Q2 '04)
GENRE: Adventure
PLAYERS: 1-2

■ Prepare for an odd slice of pandemonium as Capcom unleashes its cel-shaded invade-'em-up in the West.



■ Understand, understand, understand, understand, understand the concept of love…

■ Get hit in disguise and you'll be reduced to underwear and chased until your alien form is uncovered.


eMag

PIKMIN 2



Unfortunately, ordering your Pikmin to assume the 'ladder' formation hasn't made it into the final version…



That'll certainly help pay off the debt – those things are worth a fortune.

A LONG TIME AGO IN A GARDEN FAR, FAR AWAY…

DETAILS
FORMAT: GameCube
ORIGIN: Japan
PUBLISHER: Nintendo
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q3 '04 (Japan: Out Now)
GENRE: Strategy
PLAYERS: 1-2

Nintendo's genre-straddling garden-'em-up returns with multiplayer action, new breeds of Pikmin and all manner of swag to hoard.

Riddle me this: what exactly is *Pikmin*? An RTS? An action game? There are definitely adventure elements, but what about the puzzle aspect? Nintendo's flowery frolicking defies classification arguably more than any other title this generation, but that obviously can't be a bad thing since the popular title has already spawned an even more twisted adventure in the distant reaches of space.

After his exploits with the Pikmin and his flora-assisted escape, Captain Olimar returns home to find that his company is in financial turmoil and his boss is furious. A cruel twist of fate sees the podgy spaceman sent back to the planet from which he spent almost a month escaping in order to round up trinkets to sell to set the firm afloat and appease management. Makes you wonder if Babylon Zoo knew what they were talking about when they glamorised the astronautical profession…

One interesting new feature sees Olimar and pals venturing below ground into the many winding caves and dungeons under the planet's surface. These are generated at random upon entry – adding to the game's replay value – and are usually chock-full of goodies for you to ship back to your furious, penniless boss. The downside? As it's dark underground there's no way of propagating reinforcements should your Pikmin numbers begin to dwindle. The rewards usually make this risk worthwhile, although the added pressure will come as a culture shock to those who played the first game enough to become accustomed to the plentiful supplies of additional forces.

In addition to the three classic breeds of see-no-evil, hear-no-evil, speak-no-evil Pikmin, you now have a further two at your disposal. The larger purple chaps are substantially heavier and more powerful than your average plant and can be used to scythe through enemy forces and even trigger switches or break barriers. The albino Pikmin, by contrast, are the scrawniest of the bunch but their potent gas attack more than makes up for their physical weakness.

All of your flowery allies have been given a wider repertoire of abilities as well, so you'll need to cleverly manage your forces if you want to build bridges, traverse dangerous areas and salvage the most expensive trinkets. We're also promised over 60 different enemies, some familiar and others less so. Still, as long as the poisonous foes can still turn your friends into the scary, purple, fungus-capped Pikmin from the first game, we'll be happy. Until it happens to us, of course.

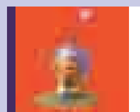
Even more interesting is the multiplayer support and its clever integration via the second captain, whose name translates as Looije (sound familiar? Who said originality at Nintendo was dead?). In single-player mode, you can switch between captains at any time, broadening the game's horizons further still and making for some very interesting possibilities – anyone who's played Camelot's wonderful *Superstar Saga* will know just the kind we mean. Plug in a second controller, however, and the gloves come off as both tiny spacemen turn mercenary in an attempt to round up more swag than the other. The Pikmin civil wars that this scenario creates are positively disturbing, especially when the creepy spirits of the deceased flower people spiral skywards to a better place.

With Pikmin fever recently renewed in the East with the release of this game, it's only a matter of time before PAL territories are treated to the second coming of flower power.

HOW SOON IS NOW?

Slowpokes rejoice – the time limit that tainted the memory of the first game for many is gone. Again, though, your quest will be governed by the passage of day and night so you'll still have a limited amount of time each day before you need to put your flowery friends to bed. But without the impending doom of a one-month deadline, this much-anticipated sequel will offer a substantially more open-ended experience for all your junk-collecting needs. This should not only make for a more enjoyable adventure but also means replaying the game or returning to the Challenge modes and suchlike will be less of a chore – a wonderful thing in anyone's book.

"IN SINGLE-PLAYER MODE YOU CAN SWITCH BETWEEN CAPTAINS AT ANY TIME, FURTHER BROADENING THE GAME'S HORIZONS"



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Nintendo's in-house projects tend to be franchise-led and familiar, so it's always good to see a slightly more adventurous title come out of the house of Mario. As one of the oldest and most respected firms in the industry, there are very few companies that can match the flair of the big N when it gets it oh-so-right.

HISTORY

- **WARIO WARE INC.: MEGA MICROGAME$** 2003 [GBA]
- **SUPER MARIO 64** 1997 [Nintendo 64]
- **DONKEY KONG** 1981 [Arcade]

"HEAD STRAIGHT FOR THE ACTION OR SPEND AS MUCH TIME EXPLORING AS YOU PLEASE, AS TIME IN THIS GAME IS LIMITLESS"

NINTENDO PRESS RELEASE

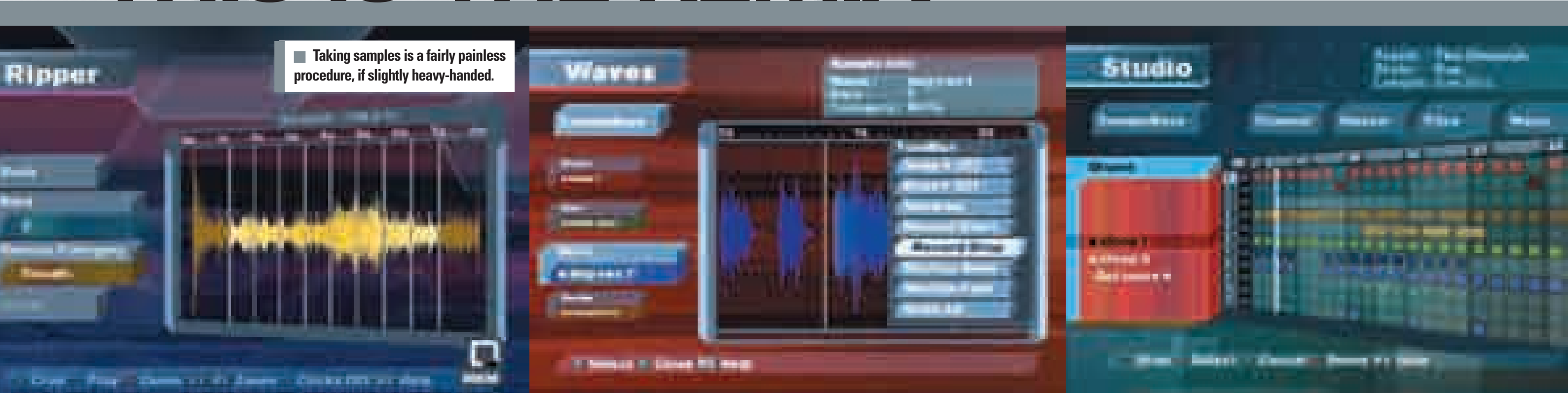
VIDEOGAMES MATHS

SOWING THE SEEDS OF LOVE

PIKMIN - TIME LIMIT x GREEN FINGERS = PIKMIN 2

The ghosts of Pikmin killed in action have been made even more distressing to make you feel terrible for letting them die.

MTV MUSIC GENERATOR 3: THIS IS THE REMIX



Taking samples is a fairly painless procedure, if slightly heavy-handed.

IT'S GOT A BACK BEAT, YOU CAN'T LOSE IT…

Ever since *Music* on the PSone, the urge to use consoles to create as well as to drive, battle, explore or dance has been on the increase. With today's more technically advanced equipment, you'd think recent titles would have a significant advantage over those of yesteryear, and while you'd be right, everything comes at a price…

On the one hand, Xbox owners have been bereft of a quality music program since day one (PlayStation2 owners, of course, have the likes of *Music 3000* and the original *MTV* title to argue over, with the former being all-conquering), and this title looks as slick and polished as any of its rivals or predecessors. Ease of use will also earn Codemasters a gold star – in a genre so renowned for inch-thick manuals and hellish interfaces, the simple cut-and-paste front end is a breath of fresh air.

On the other hand, there are several areas that need work or that don't quite deliver on promises at this time. The Ripper tool (which allows you to take samples from your soundtracks on the Xbox hard drive) is a fantastic and inspired inclusion, but simply doesn't use the hardware as it could; as well as being limited to 20 ten-second clips, beat matching and synchronisation can be awkward when cropping a sample due to the consequential pitch alterations. The fact that you're stuck rigidly with the tempo of whichever of the ten sound banks you choose to work with (each of which is based on a commercially released 'tune', if Sean Paul's annoying gibberish can even be referred to as such) can also stunt creativity somewhat, not helped by the predominantly 'urban' (for want of a better term) genres on offer.

Ultimately, what you have to remember is that this is going to be a £30 console remix title, not a professional home studio with a three-figure price tag. Certainly for the money *Music Generator 3* offers a hell of a lot of content along with some wonderful ideas and features that should push the genre forwards. Things like the CD sampler and built-in drum machine are superb for the progression of the genre and, at this rate, it really won't be long before professional-sounding tracks can be made as easily as rappin' cool with Parappa. If you're any good, at least.

Being so easy to use, sporting endorsements from popular names like Outkast and Snoop Dogg, and wearing the trademark most music packages would die for, it's clear that this is aimed squarely at the mass market – not the usual demographic for this sort of 'technical' title – so it'll be interesting to see just how well Codemasters' latest sonic offering will fare in the shops.

"WHILE NOT AS COMPREHENSIVE AS, SAY, MUSIC 3000, THE USER-FRIENDLINESS OPENS THIS UP TO A NEW AUDIENCE"

DETAILS

FORMAT: Xbox, PS2
ORIGIN: UK
PUBLISHER: Codemasters
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q2 '04
GENRE: Music
PLAYERS: 1

Codemasters continues to innovate with the third outing for the branded music package, complete with CD sampling capabilities and, um, Sean Paul. Damn.



The Beatbox allows you to create entirely new drum loops with a decent selection of samples.


eMag

THE SAGA OF RYZOM



"THE LIBERAL GAMEPLAY OF RYZOM IS INNOVATIVE BUT IS STILL ATTACHED TO THE BASICS OF CLASSIC ROLE-PLAYING GAME FEATURES"

SAGA OF RYZOM PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

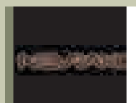
TAKE AWAY THE MATHS, RAMP UP THE ALIENS

MASSIVELY MULTIPLAYER + INSECT ALIENS - INTIMIDATING STATISTICS = THE SAGA OF RYZOM

After forming a guild with other players you can take on unique missions and capture outposts.

THE SAGA OF RYZOM

PC



DEVELOPER PROFILE

■ *The Saga Of Ryzom* will mark Nevrax's first venture into the MMORPG genre. Founded in Paris in early 2000, the team has steadily grown to over 50 engineers and designers, all of whom are now working on completing *Ryzom*.

HISTORY

■ THE SAGA OF RYZOM IS THE FIRST GAME BY NEVRAX

IN GAMING'S EQUIVALENT OF DAVID VERSUS GOLIATH, WILL THE UNDERDOG TRIUMPH AGAIN?

Those seeking to make their mark in the MMORPG arena will encounter an unfortunate catch-22 situation. With *EverQuest* cultivating fanatical devotion thanks to the emotional (and financial) investment gamers have put into their online avatars, and with a finite number of MMORPG players, it's tough for rookie developers to smash such strong brand loyalty. Multiplayer games need players to entice newcomers and keep servers running, while gamers need the reassurance that a title, in addition to being enjoyable, will be around for a while. So *The Saga Of Ryzom* is aiming to combine accessibility and depth, bridging the gap between genre veterans and neophytes.

Deciding a character's stats isn't the usual bewildering affair of adjusting sliders and attribute points – all players begin on a level footing and improve automatically according to their in-game actions. There are conventional character upgrades, such as melee attributes increasing if you spend most of your time wading in with weapons, or magic capabilities increasing when you cast spells. However, it's the atypical abilities that we're interested in, breaking away from RPG stereotypes to attract those keen to try something new. For example, if you don't want to fight, you can search the landscape for raw materials that can be dug up and sold. The more you scout, the less time it takes until it becomes a viable way of making money and progressing through the gameworld of Atys. Interaction with the environment should be as important as interaction with other players.

"THE SAGA OF RYZOM IS AIMING TO COMBINE ACCESSIBILITY AND DEPTH, TO PLEASE GENRE VETERANS AND NEOPHYTES"

In addition to combing the land for raw materials, you'll meet the numerous creatures that roam Atys, all with variable behaviour; some sniff you out of curiosity, others keep a watchful eye on you, some react depending on how you've treated their species. If you've killed any of their kind to sell the bones, skin or meat then they'll be hostile. Certain species, such as the elephant-like Netubes, can be tamed and then sold or used as transport. The illusion of wildlife is thus far a convincing one, with animals also attacking other species and travelling in packs.

While you're generally given carte blanche, there's a stiff you-cannot-leave-this-island-until-you-complete-these-missions structure. This could prove a blessing in disguise as the islands will separate gamers of differing levels, helping those who would otherwise find their first tentative steps into Atys interrupted by overbearing experienced gamers. As always, teaming up is the way to get ahead and once your group is big enough to form a guild, you can search for outposts. You can attack and capture these, and then leave NPCs to guard your outpost while your guild completes unique team missions. With plenty of major towns and four races of NPC characters inhabiting Atys, you won't be twiddling your thumbs in your new home.

The ambition here is admirable and there's no reason why the quality of *Saga Of Ryzom* won't stand toe-to-toe with *EverQuest*. But our concern is whether this will be enough to woo support away from the *EverQuest* camp, as without similar emotional and financial investment, Nevrax's vision could be fruitless.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PC
ORIGIN: France
PUBLISHER: TBA
DEVELOPER: Nevrax
RELEASE: TBA (US: June '04)
GENRE: MMORPG
PLAYERS: Massively Multiplayer

■ An ambitious MMORPG that will vie for gamers' hearts by combining flexible character development with guilds, outposts, hostile animals and sci-fi fantasy.

HAVE WE MET BEFORE?

The plot is normally peripheral in MMORPGs, as the games don't have the strict boundaries or structure to allow for in-depth storytelling. Nevertheless, we do learn about the four races on Atys (Trykers, Fyros, Matis and Zoraïs) and how they relate to each other. There's also a timeline running from 2435's Fire of Coriolis to 2525's New Beginning. Although the story is too detailed to offer even a potted version of events here, your main enemies are the Kitin, reminiscent of *Starship Troopers*' insect foes. With the alienish Cami showing anime lineage in their design, *Ryzom* wears its influences on its sleeve.



■ When fighting, it's important to keep track of nearby animals in case they join the fray.

PSI-OPS: THE MINDGATE CONSPIRACY



Using objects as rudimentary shields against oncoming fire is a skill you'll need to learn fairly early on.

Now you've got your levitating guard, the options are endless – although they'll all end in the poor guy's grisly demise.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PS2, Xbox
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Midway
DEVELOPER: In-House
RELEASE: Q3 '04
GENRE: Action Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

It's all in the mind as you take on an army of super soldiers with your devastating arsenal of psychic powers.

THE MIND PLAYS TRICKS, YOU KNOW…

To the untrained eye, *Psi-Ops: The Mindgate Conspiracy* might look like a fairly unremarkable third-person stealth/action romp, but beneath its seemingly generic exterior lurks a wealth of mind-bending gameplay innovations. While all the hallmarks of a traditional blast-fest are firmly in place – from the standard-issue arsenal of firearms to the 'kill 'em all' mentality – it's lead protagonist Nick Scryer's repertoire of psychic powers that steal the show and promise to set this stealth adventure apart from its abundance of peers.

Telekinesis has to be the most useful and endlessly rewarding trick up Scryer's muscle-stuffed sleeve, allowing him to levitate and manipulate any reasonably sized item in the environment – including enemies. This power alone presents players with an extensive range of options for dealing with the game's network of puzzles and patrolling guards. You can take hold of an enemy and hurl them viciously across the room, suspend a helpless victim in mid air while you riddle them with bullets, or how about hovering a gas canister above a group of your foes and promptly blasting it to pieces? The list goes on – you can use a floating crate as a portable shield, manoeuvre pieces of scenery to create bridges and the like or, best of all, take to the air yourself aboard a levitating object in true Silver Surfer style.

Other skills you'll develop as the story progresses enable you to assume direct control of adversaries and have them gun down their bewildered buddies, while Remote Viewing lets you take a sneaky peek at what lies ahead and devise a cunning plan in advance.

The upshot of all these powers is that you'll always be able to find a multitude of solutions to any given situation – destructive, intelligent or something carefully balanced in between – but if this is the game's strongest selling point then the inspired use of cutting-edge Havok 2 physics has to rank a close second. It's refreshing to see the physics engine forming such an integral part of the gameplay rather than serving as mere decoration; it certainly adds a tremendous element of satisfaction to Scryer's various telekinetic stunts and helps polish off an imaginative package of freeform gameplay that appears to be coming together very nicely indeed from what we've seen so far.

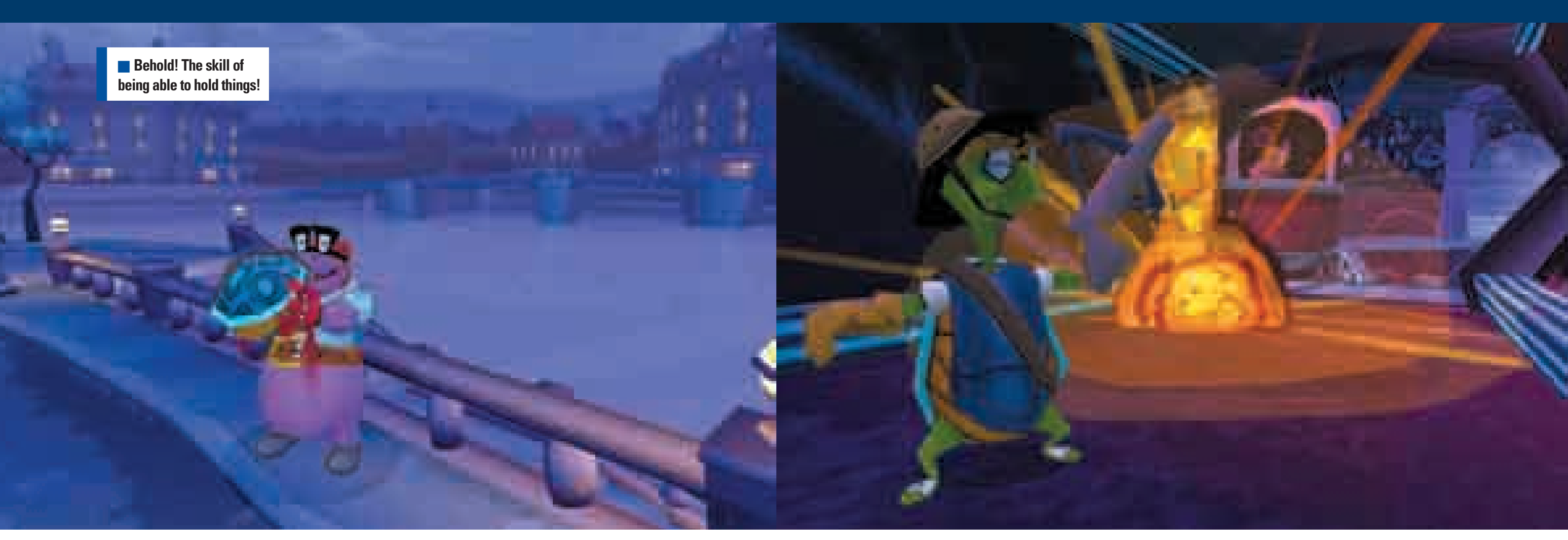
"IT'S REFRESHING TO SEE THE PHYSICS ENGINE ACTUALLY FORMING AN INTEGRAL PART OF THE GAMEPLAY"



Scryer's as tough as they come, though he's certainly not indestructible…


eMag

SLY 2: BAND OF THIEVES



Behold! The skill of being able to hold things!

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR BOOTY IS TONIGHT?

Lara Croft is in limbo, Crash Bandicoot is temporarily AWOL, and this is the first time this writer has written the name Spyro the Dragon in many a moon. Nintendo gives you characters so reluctant to come out of hiding they often only perform once per console iteration (much to the fans' delight), while Sony gives you a plethora of candidates that regularly find themselves beaming out of posters before falling back into the shadow of apathy, never to hear a single cry of 'encore'. The first *Sly Cooper* was different – not least because a raccoon in a burglar suit works and the game's children's-book look was well-suited to cel shading. But although it played quite well there wasn't so much room for improvement as an entire unoccupied wing awaiting attention.

Enter a new, more mature-looking Sly who is positively rippling with muscles (if at the expense of his previously cutesy appearance). Somehow, he's discovered even more uses for his all-purpose Crook, such as picking the pockets of guards for currency, items or keys, and Bentley has been kind enough to upgrade Sly's Binocucom (ignore the silly name – it's basically a scope that pinpoints targets and lets Sly survey his surroundings) to make the multitude of missions that much more palatable. Movement is now far stealthier than before, although the speedier moves of the first game are but a button press away for the more impatient among you. You may also notice that Sly's cumbersome satchel has been replaced with a burglar-chic pouch, reflecting the game's noticeable shift away from the now vilified collect-'em-up genre (*Pokémon* excluded) and into a less offensive blend of co-operation and stealth.

> "BAND OF THIEVES IS CLEARLY VYING FOR THE 'SLEEPER HIT' ROSETTE THAT THE FIRST GAME NEARLY WON IN 2002"

It's not only the characters that have changed dramatically for this sneaky sequel. Gone is the A-to-B level design of the first game, replaced with a large area in which your heists are planned, staged and (hopefully) escaped from intact. These are inhabited by a new breed of enemy – more intelligent, more agile and more downright annoying than ever before. Persistent to a fault, they will now punish raccoons, turtles and hippos of meagre stealth by chasing them to the ends of the earth (or level, more likely) before unleashing some pain.

To make matters worse, easy kills have been done away with and you'll only ever be safe when you're well concealed from the ever-wandering guards. It's not all bad news, though, as Sly's cane-twirling violence has been greatly augmented and now a lengthy beating can even culminate in a triple whammy of delights – an impressive finishing move, a Batman-esque onomatopoeic blast and a crescendo of horns from the again sublime sound.

By sticking to the finer features of the previous game and building the rest of the title around an ambitious ideal that, on Sucker Punch's own admission, owes more to the *Grand Theft Auto* series than to the usual platform suspects, *Band Of Thieves* is certainly vying for the 'sleeper hit' rosette that its forerunner came so close to achieving in 2002. But with the *Jak And Daxter* series taking a turn for the worse with its obvious influences from Rockstar's seminal crime games, we'll need to give it a few months before proclaiming this 'Best In Show', or indeed granting it any similar accolade.

Still, it's with baited breath that we await a finished build – although anything close would suffice at this early stage – to see if the most infamous raccoon in gaming (and no, Mario in his silly outfit doesn't count) can steal our hearts as well as a pile of priceless artefacts.

NOW THAT'S TEAMWORK

While the idea of three heroes teaming up may be too like *Sonic Heroes* for comfort, there is some solace to be found in the fact that the idea is more well-rounded here. In an astounding feat of clichéd casting, Sly is the sneakiest and most agile of the three; Bentley is 'the brains', a coward with access to tranquillisers and explosives who'll deal with many of the puzzle sections; and Murray the hippo's brute strength makes up for his lack of cranial fortitude, even if his stature makes stealth a no-no. By using these abilities together there's massive scope for route planning and branching within the levels.

DETAILS

FORMAT: PlayStation2
ORIGIN: US
PUBLISHER: Sony
DEVELOPER: Sucker Punch
RELEASE: Sept '04
GENRE: Platform Adventure
PLAYERS: 1

Manage your team of forest-dwelling thieves as they pick a pocket or two with all new team-play elements to remind you that you're not playing the first game after all.



DEVELOPER PROFILE

Sucker Punch may only have one title under its belt, but considering that *Sly Cooper* remains one of the more adventurous and stylish games on the PlayStation2, you can't help but watch the firm's future projects with great anticipation and anxiety. Go on then – start anticipating…

HISTORY

SLY COOPER AND THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS 2002 [PS2]

'Raccoon' is Native American for "He who uses little hands". Really.

"SLY 2 DELIVERS A TRUE THIEVING EXPERIENCE AS PLAYERS EXPLORE THE OPEN ENVIRONMENTS AND MUST THINK ON THEIR FEET TO SURVIVE"
SCEA PRESS RELEASE

VIDEOGAMES MATHS

NEW ELEMENTS, NO QUESTIONS ASKED…

THE THIEVIUS RACCOONUS + MORE THIEVES + COMMANDOS = SLY 2

Ever wondered what happened to the cast of the 1986 Um Bongo adverts?

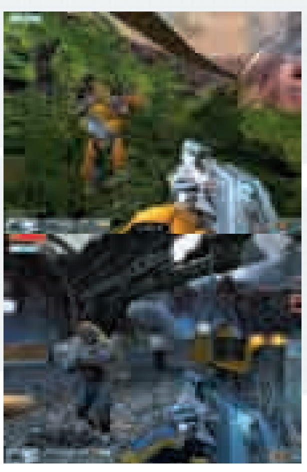
SHOWCASE

MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

Tribes: Vengeance

WHEN TWO TRIBES GO TO WAR

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Vivendi Universal
Developer: Irrational Games
Genre: FPS
Players: 1 (1-TBA Online)



With many PC-based first-person shooters focusing heavily on the online multiplayer route these days, it's slightly refreshing to see that Vivendi's latest update to the *Tribes* series is at least claiming to offer a decent single-player story for players to get their teeth into as well. Pitching itself as a 'roiling galactic thriller', *Vengeance*'s solo game allows players to experience the story through multiple viewpoints and characters while catching glimpses of other interrelated stories unfolding behind the scenes – all of which most likely means there'll be lots of cut-scenes between each explosion. Not that we mind, of course – as long as the game upholds the *Tribes* legacy, we'll be more than happy.

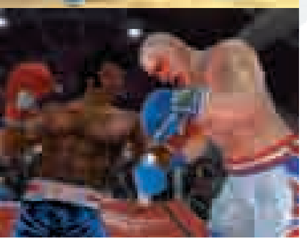
RELEASE DATE: Q4 '04

Rocky Legends

SECONDS OUT… ROUND TWO

Format: PlayStation2/Xbox
Origin: UK
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Venom Games
Genre: Sports
Players: 1-2







Rage might now be as dead as a dodo, but there's little doubt that its final release was a real belter. *Rocky* managed to not only capture the essence of the upper-cutting movies, but also proved to be a damn decent boxing game as well. With most of the game's team now working at Venom Games then, it seems only right that its next title should be a continuation of the *Rocky* legacy with *Rocky Legends*. Offering the same arcade-style action that the last game had, *Legends* promises to have new boxers and venues, better visuals and more intuitive gameplay, plus all the characters from the movies too. Here's hoping it can match up to the superb original…

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '04

Sid Meier's Pirates!

TIME FOR AN UPDATED BOTTLE OF RUM

Format: PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Firaxis Games
Genre: Action Adventure
Players: 1



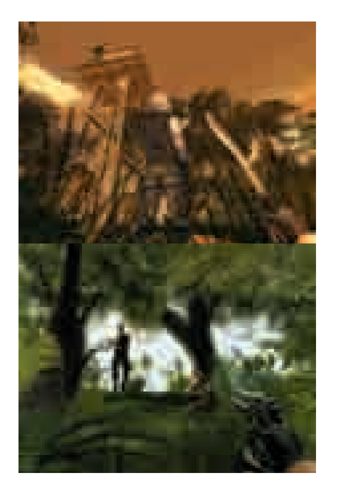
To say that *Pirates!* seems like an ambitious project would probably be an understatement – there's so much to do in it that Sid Meier's going to have his hands full getting it finished. Coming as close to a simulation of life on the ocean waves as you're going to get, *Pirates!* allows you to do pretty much anything you'd like – looting and pillaging, recruiting sailors, hunting treasure, sword fighting, accepting missions from various island governors, wooing women… you name it, you can do it (and practically everything else in between). Like we said, it sounds incredibly ambitious, and seeing as it's been anticipated for a while we can only hope it actually hits its release deadline later this year.

RELEASE DATE: October '04

Far Cry: Instincts

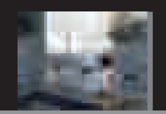
WISH YOU WERE HERE…?

Format: TBA
Origin: Canada
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Genre: FPS
Players: 1 (Multiplayer TBA)



Ahh… so that would explain why the supposedly in-development Xbox port of *Far Cry* disappeared off the radar, then. With the original PC version flying relatively high in the charts, we're rather impressed with Ubisoft's decision to create an entirely new game using the *Far Cry* engine, rather than a simple port. And as this is being developed by the company's respected Montreal studio, we've got high expectations already. Of course, the fact that Ubisoft won't be drawn to reveal what platforms we can expect the game to appear on is rather suspect, but it's not hard to guess – the current stance is for 'select next-generation consoles', though we'll eat our collective hat if it doesn't at least make it to the Xbox.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '04



Delayed – **Headhunter: Redemption [Xbox, PS2]**
■ We've been waiting for ages, so another delay doesn't come as much of a surprise. SEGA's follow-up to the Dreamcast adventure has been put back again, this time to a slightly unsteady September release.



Canned – **XSN Sports titles [Xbox]**
■ Realising that it takes more than just a new number to make a decent sequel, Microsoft has cancelled development of all its *2005*-branded XSN Sports titles. Expect new releases for the 2006 season.

Ace Combat 5 [Working Title]

MORE BANDITS ON THE PS2'S SIX

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: SCEE
Developer: Namco
Genre: Shoot-'Em-Up
Players: 1



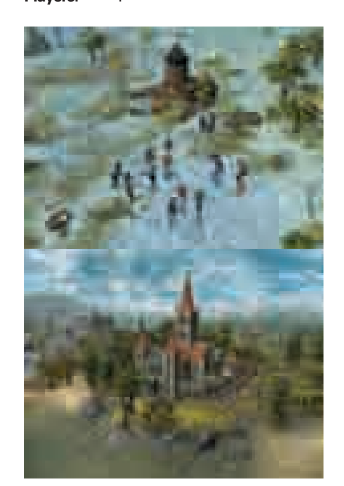
The competition for aerial dogfighting games isn't exactly fierce, but it's clear that *Ace Combat* is among the best examples out there – a point that explains why the series is now heading into a fifth instalment. Yes, so the announcement of a near-future plot that sees you defending the nation of Osea from an unknown force is all very well, but what matters are the planes; over 50 different licensed models, to be exact, that can be used to fly through numerous environments. With several new elements also due for inclusion (such as a new Wingman Command that lets you give instructions to your teammates), it looks like Sony might have another success under its jet-encrusted wing.

RELEASE DATE: Q1 '05

Settlers V [Working Title]

A CLASSIC SERIES FINALLY GROWS UP

Format: PC
Origin: Germany
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Blue Byte
Genre: RTS
Players: 1



It's always a shame when a much-loved series is forced to change, but in the case of *Settlers* we can see where Blue Byte is coming from. The game's traditionally cartoon-style graphics have started to date, making a move into a more realistic setting all the more necessary to keep up with the real-time-strategy competition. Nevertheless, we're hoping that doesn't mean that the core elements that helped the previous four *Settlers* titles sell over five million copies worldwide will be compromised. It's likely that the addition of a fully animated 3D environment and enhanced gameplay features, as well as moving the game into a medieval setting, will only add to the experience.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '04

Def Jam Vendetta 2

MORE SHIZZLE FOR YOUR NIZZLE

Format: PS2, Xbox, GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: EA Sports BIG
Developer: EA Canada/Aki
Genre: Beat-'Em-Up
Players: 1-4



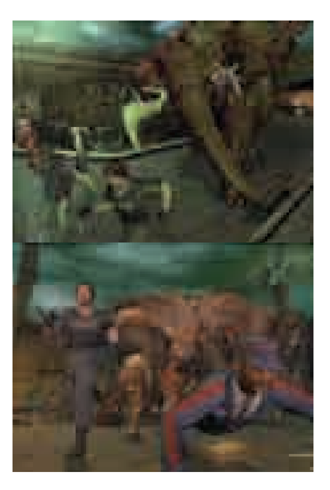
Perhaps it was inevitable, given EA's preference for sequels of its sports games, but the announcement of *Def Jam Vendetta 2* actually pleases us. The last game's interesting mix of over-the-top violence and underground urban lifestyles, not to mention the inclusion of numerous hip-hop artists as playable characters, kept us happy for long enough, so the sequel's promise of over 70 fighters (including more than 35 real-life personalities) sounds good. No doubt it'll simply be an improvement rather than an all-out new game, but when it promises the opportunity to watch Snoop Dogg beating the living daylights out of Sean Paul… well, who really gives a damn?

RELEASE DATE: Q3 '04

Resident Evil Outbreak: File 2

WE'RE ALL GOING TO THE ZOO TOMORROW

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-House
Genre: Survival
Players: 1 (1-8 Online)



We'd say that Capcom Japan's decision to announce a sequel to a game that isn't even out in the UK until September is somewhat annoying, but, well, it'd be a waste of breath. So instead we'll simply tell you that *File 2* picks up where *Outbreak* finishes and sees the same cast of characters continuing their journey through a zombie-infested Raccoon City in order to escape to safety. Offering even more scenarios than the first game (including one set in Raccoon City Zoo), it all sounds rather great. Even better, though, is the news that Capcom Europe should be able to resolve its online problems by the time the game hits our shores, ensuring that this time we might not miss out on the multiplayer action. Joy.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '05

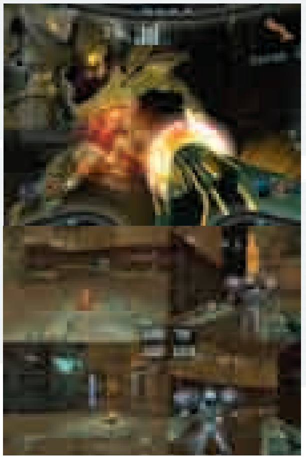
SHOWCASE CONT.

EVEN MORE THINGS TO WATCH FOR ON THE GAMING HORIZON

Metroid Prime 2

MORE OF THE SAME, ONLY BETTER

Format: GameCube
Origin: US
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Retro Studios
Genre: Adventure
Players: 1-4



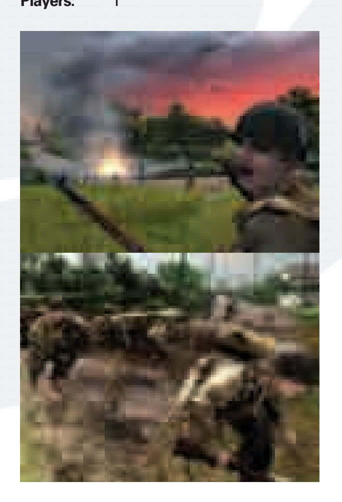
The original is still the only game to score full marks since games™ began, so it's only right that we've got high hopes for *Metroid Prime 2*. Of course, the counter-balance is that unless the game manages to reach unimaginable heights of quality, we're likely to be disappointed. It looks great from what we've seen, but being able to avoid delivering just '*Metroid Prime* on a new planet' is going to be the real test for Retro Studios. Unfortunately, it looks like the developer has already bowed to pressure in one respect, thanks to the inclusion of a new multiplayer mode. Considering *Prime* was never an FPS in the first place, we're not entirely convinced, but then there's always the chance that Nintendo will work its magic.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '04

Brothers In Arms

BY THE LEFT, QUICK MARCH

Format: PS2/Xbox/PC
Origin: US
Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Gearbox Software
Genre: Squad-based shooter
Players: 1





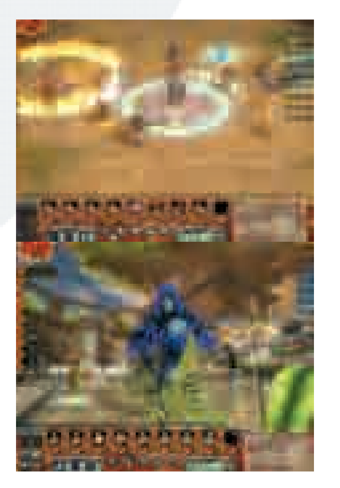
You might think you've played enough war-based games to last a lifetime, but you're clearly wrong – if you had, then Ubisoft wouldn't be bringing out another one. Developed by Gearbox Software (a firm with contributions to franchises such as *Half-Life* and *Halo* on its CV), *Brothers In Arms* promises a gritty and emotionally charged experience… which most likely just means more carnage and scripted cut-scenes designed to upset you. So far, Ubisoft has only revealed that the squad-based action draws its inspiration from a true story, so you can at least be sure that the locations and weapons are realistic. What the game will add to the already crowded genre, though, remains to be seen.

RELEASE DATE: Q4 '04

Chaos League

TAKE ME OUT AT THE BALL GAME

Format: PC
Origin: France
Publisher: Digital Jesters
Developer: Cyanide Studios
Genre: Sports RTS
Players: 1 (Online TBA)



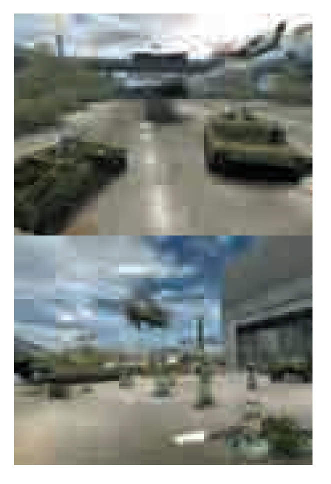
Sports games are ten-a-penny these days, but we can't think of any set in a fantasy monster realm since *Mutant League Football* on the Mega Drive. That's why *Chaos League* stands out as something a bit interesting – especially since it encapsulates elements of both the RTS and RPG genres as well. Using your team of nine players (themed around one of ten races such as Orcs, Barbarians and even the living dead), the idea is to get the ball into your opponent's end zone by any means possible – even if that means tearing the other team limb from limb in the process. It's simple but quite fun, and the strategy aspect helps keep the somewhat violent action in check. Here's hoping the gaming public agree with us.

RELEASE DATE: June '04

Battlefield: Modern Combat

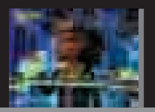
AND IT'S ABOUT TIME TOO

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Sweden
Publisher: Electronic Arts
Developer: Digital Illusions
Genre: FPS
Players: 1-24



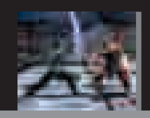
While we're not entirely convinced that restricting it to a PlayStation2 exclusive is the best move, the appearance of the *Battlefield* series on a console is at least good news in itself. No doubt much of what *Modern Combat* will entail will be familiar to stalwart *Battlefield* fans (taking checkpoints, shooting enemies and not much else), but the more time-sensitive setting will help bring the game up to date than previous efforts. Unfortunately, the bad news is that online play is restricted to only 24 people – 12 a side – so those of us used to massive 32-on-32 battles will have to stick to our PCs and keep playing the joys of *Desert Combat* until the official sequel, *Battlefield 2*, comes out next spring.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '04



Delayed – Karaoke Stage [PS2]

Citing technical issues as the reason behind the game's slippage, Konami's gaming take on the song-related pastime has missed its May release, giving Sony's *SingStar* a clear solo run at success.



Canned – Mortal Kombat [GameCube]

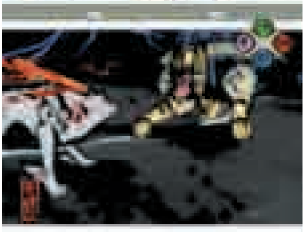
Not so much canned as never announced. With Midway renouncing all GameCube development from now on, fans of the bloodthirsty series will have to pick up another console to get to grips with the latest game.

Okami

THE GAME THAT CRIED WOLF

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Clover Studios
Genre: Action Adventure
Players: 1





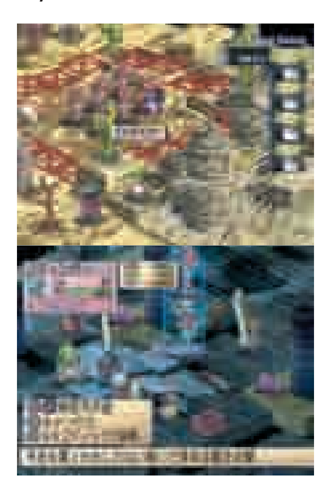
Never let it be said that Capcom isn't a gaming innovator – having allowed some of its very best to set up Clover Studios as a means of airing their creativity, it's now due to unleash the rather unique-sounding *Okami* on the world. Presented in a traditional style of Japanese artwork, you (as Amaterasu, the mythical sun goddess in the earthly form of a wolf) have to explore a land of darkness and use the power of people's prayers to destroy the evil monsters within, ultimately restoring colour to the land. It might sound rather strange, but then some of the best games always do (particularly in the case of Capcom). And judging by some of the talent working on the game, we've got high hopes for it already.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '04

Phantom Brave

IF AT FIRST YOU DO SUCCEED…

Format: PlayStation2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Nippon Ichi
Developer: In-House
Genre: RPG
Players: 1



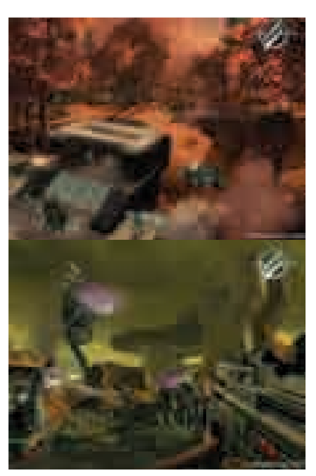
It's always nice to see a developer deliver a surprise hit, but it's even nicer when it follows it up with another that's even better. Considering the swift delivery of *Phantom Brave* after the somewhat surprising overnight success of *Disgaea*, though, it looks like Nippon Ichi has got the right idea. This isn't an official sequel, but it might as well be going on the characters, presentation and other elements on show – all the ideas that made *Disgaea* great are here, as well as a brand new story to keep things moving. The good news is that Nippon Ichi is setting up an American office to publish the game in the West, which makes the likelihood of the game eventually coming out in Europe even greater than before. Yay.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '04

Pariah

SO REAL, IT'S UNREAL… ALMOST

Format: PC/Xbox
Origin: Canada
Publisher: Groove Games
Developer: Digital Extremes
Genre: FPS
Players: 1-TBA



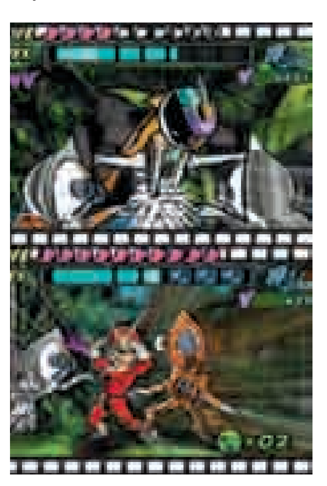
Closely following the idea of sticking to what you're good at, the news that Digital Extremes' new title is an FPS (and one based on the *Unreal* engine, at that) isn't exactly surprising. Still, the developer's past work on *Unreal Tournament* and *Unreal Championship* will no doubt put it in good stead with FPS fans, and the fact that *Pariah* has been under wraps for nearly two years (and looks gorgeous to boot) is also pretty comforting. Of course, we've heard promises of games taking a genre to new heights and having immersive storylines many times before, so we'll hold off on saying that *Pariah* will be truly amazing until Digital Extremes puts its money where its mouth is and lets us play it…

RELEASE DATE: TBA '04

Viewtiful Joe 2

GIRLS CAN BE SUPERHEROES TOO

Format: GameCube/PS2
Origin: Japan
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: Clover Studios
Genre: Platform Beat-'Em-Up
Players: 1



It might not have done as well as it deserved at retail, but *Viewtiful Joe* still managed to find itself a receptive audience. So we're rather pleased that Capcom already has a sequel in the works, due out before the end of the year on the GameCube and PS2, the latter of which also gets a release of the original (with *Devil May Cry*'s Dante as a secret hero). Though the basic formula doesn't appear to have changed much, sources suggest that a number of additional elements will be introduced including new vehicles, special moves and even the introduction of Silvia (Joe's girlfriend) in her enhanced superhero form as a playable character. If it's as good as the original, we can hardly wait.

RELEASE DATE: TBA '04





When is a Mario game not a Mario game? **Super Mario Bros 2 NES [Nintendo] 1988**

Hurt me plenty...

Fear, paranoia and frenetic action. Gamers take these factors for granted today, but without an unassuming shareware game called Doom we would still consider corpulent plumbers and accelerated hedgehogs the pinnacle of gaming expertise...

Contemporary gamers are in danger of becoming complacent. As the industry has forged ahead through ideologies and technological progression, we now take for granted such factors as multiplayer, intense, tactical action and a climate of palpable suspense. And well we should; especially with *Doom 3* looming ever nearer. Since its 1993 debut, *Doom* has appeared on shows such as *ER* and *Friends*, and achieved as much controversy as success. So just how many of the lodestones of modern gaming do we owe to *Doom*?

To understand the creative genesis of *Doom*, and therefore that of modern PC games, you need to comprehend the disparate minds behind it: John Carmack and John Romero. As a child, Romero was astounded by the supra-reality portrayed in (then) cutting-edge games such as *Asteroids*, the first-person *Battlezone* and the mainframe computer text world of *Colossal Cave Adventure*. Like Romero, the insular Carmack thrived in a vicarious life, experienced via Dungeons and Dragons, fantasy novels and 'virtual world' games. Their collective desire for immediate and immersive escapism, which they believed was epitomised in the Holodeck of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, would eventually form one of the most influential games of the modern age.

Meeting as coders at a small shareware company, Romero and Carmack began to fuse into a creative mass, with Carmack as the technical genius and Romero the 'ideas man' who fleshed out the dynamics of Carmack's game engines and mechanics. Their first games – the popular *Commander Keen* titles – inspired them to defy the limited hardware of the late Eighties.



Romero and Carmack wanted to not only push back the boundaries, but shatter them beyond recognition. They sought to fuse the 'maze action' of games such as *Gauntlet* with the 3D world of *Wing Commander* and *Elite*. While *Doom* and id did not invent the first-person game per se, they aimed to make it into something explosive and visceral.

The template for *Doom* was found in id's *Wolfenstein 3D*. Romero wanted *Wolfenstein 3D* to be "a totally shocking game", which it was. From the health gauge and bloodied facial representation to the array of weapons, the intense action and the 'push wall' secret areas, *Doom* was all but present in *Wolfenstein 3D*. All that was now required for id's next game was the schlock horror found in *Evil Dead 2* (a favourite film of Romero and Carmack) and, perversely, a bit of Tom Cruise. *Doom* owes a debt to the film *The Color of Money*. Carmack was watching it and noticed a scene in which Tom Cruise's character saunters into a pool hall carrying a custom cue in a case. A punter asks Cruise what he has in the case, to which he coolly replies: 'Doom'. id's next game crystallised.

Mars Attacks

To fully appreciate the impact of *Doom*, you have to understand that it not only redefined the way games were made, but the way they were played. *Doom* began life as a two megabyte shareware download, and the id servers were rapidly clogged as millions of eager users struggled to download a copy. Romero and Carmack had enjoyed commercial success with their previous games, but they soon realised that *Doom* was serious. Plot and narrative were attenuated in favour of the concentrated carnage, and the story within the game seems almost an afterthought. As Carmack opined during the creation of *Doom*: "Story in a game is like story in a ▷

> "Doom 3 finds itself imperilled by an advanced and more cerebral gaming environment that it directly and indirectly fathered"

It All Starts Here

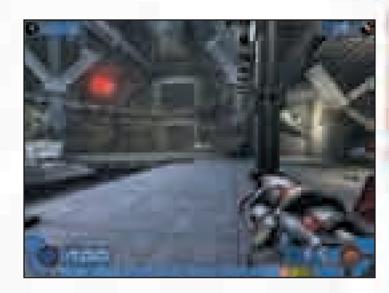
HOW THE INNOVATION INSPIRED OTHERS

Shareware

When the first nine levels of *Doom* were released on the University of Wisconsin's FTP site demand was so great that the id team were unable to sign onto the servers when they arrived for work the next day. Although only around a million copies of *Doom* were actually sold, it's estimated that around 15-20 million gamers have downloaded the shareware version.

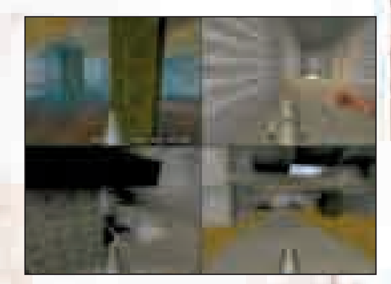
Licensing

The *Doom* engine was the first 3D graphics engine to be licensed out to other developers and gamers, and even today its influences can still be seen. Recent examples of games that use the *Unreal II* graphics engine include *Deus Ex: Invisible War, Thief: Deadly Shadows* and *Dead Man's Hand.* The licensing of engines is a major contributing factor to mod games being so popular as well.



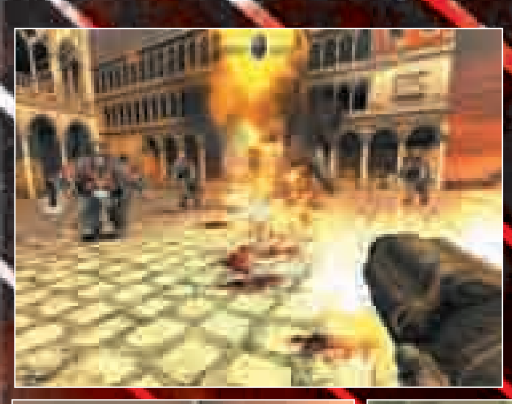
Multiplayer

Doom was the first title to allow two gamers to link up and play the same game via LAN or the internet. It's also responsible for the huge surge of interest in online gaming in general. This was later cemented by the arrival of games such as *Quake* and *Unreal Tournament*.



FPS Firsts

Doom paved the way for first-person shooters, and before long many other PC shooters were plundering the game's impressive list of innovative ideas. Using lifts, searching out key cards and the use of brutal weapons (such as the wonderful Shotgun) were just a few of *Doom*'s delights.

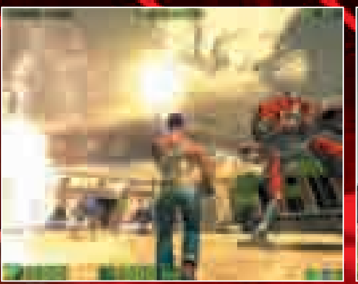


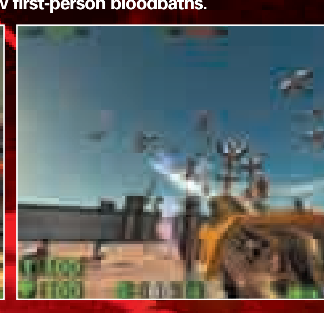
Bring Out The Imp

WILL THE WORLD EVER SEE A TRUE SUCCESSOR TO DOOM'S LEGACY?

Ten years on it's plain to see there's still a market for *Doom*'s no-nonsense approach to dealing with the denizens of Hell. With handheld titles embracing 3D technology, the simple FPS will see a new lease of life through titles like *Ashen*, one of Nokia's big hopes for the N-Gage. So be it ports of *Doom* itself or merely copycat products, expect the N-Gage QD, PSP and perhaps even Nintendo's 21st-Century dual-screen system to sport more than a few first-person bloodbaths.







Both *Serious Sam* and *Painkiller* attempt to recapture the 'twitch' style of gameplay that *Doom* pioneered over ten years ago.

porn movie; it's expected to be there, but it's not that important.'

The 3D engine it employed was peerless at the time, almost transgressing the technology of the age with scaling sprites, crude lighting effects and startling, clean texture maps. Microsoft even used a port of *Doom* to promote Windows 95. The illusion of speed and depth that *Doom* presented was such that some gamers complained of motion sickness while playing, a hitherto unknown phenomenon. Part of the sheer speed of the game engine was due to a coding concept of Carmack's called raycasting – a technique in which the PC draws only the graphics seen on screen, rather than the whole world, leading to much-improved performance. A truly revolutionary idea.

What *Doom* offered in terms of action, it doubled in fear. The cunning stereo separation kept engrossed gamers on the knife edge of tension as the dark ululations of the lurking hellspawn piqued anxiety to a frenzied pitch. We expect this feeling in modern games, but for those experiencing *Doom* in 1993, it was a sensory revolution; Romero and Carmack's virtual world made terrifyingly real and present. The game engine could comfortably handle numerous enemies at once, making for intense battles. *Doom* even featured rudimentary AI, and the sly player could make the enemies fight amongst themselves (a vital tactic when faced with almost insurmountable odds). Modern FPS games live and die by their AI constructs, and without the AI of *Doom* it can be argued that modern action games would be little more than linear shooting galleries of imbecilic foes.

> "To understand the impact of Doom you have to realise that it not only redefined the way games were made, but the way they were played"

The fraught, real-time battles in *Doom* had never been seen in games before, and the concept of action was redefined. The fun-loving Romero wanted to evoke the inner child of every gamer, and *Doom* managed that feat perfectly. The sheer simplicity of *Doom* explains why it has weathered the years with greater dignity than many more 'progressive' FPS titles – Romero and Carmack knew a game had to be fun.

Doom invented the 'deathmatch' (the word itself was coined by Romero). Until the inception of *Doom*, the multiplayer game was a slow and frustrating experience, played via costly modems or computer networks. The mainstays of

I'm Too Young



multiplayer gaming before *Doom* were multi-user dungeons (MUDs) – text-based roleplaying adventures with the interaction marred by the lack of any graphical interface. Even with MUDs, the core gameplay was co-operative or single-player; it was *Doom* that let us meet new people and dismember them, not work with them. Network *Doom* transformed an explosive single-player game into a legendary multiplayer one. id jokingly claimed that the game would be "the number-one cause of decreased productivity in businesses around the world." Its prophecy came true, and firms worldwide banned *Doom* outright.

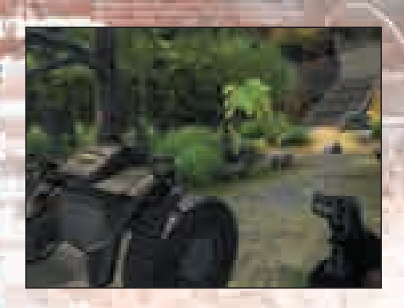
Without *Doom* conceiving the multiplayer deathmatch, it could be radically touted that the PC today would be an abandoned platform insofar as gaming is concerned. Indirectly, via id's *Quake*, *Doom* also contributed to the rise of the cyber-athlete and the international gaming tournament. No longer was gaming a quasi-social pursuit. Via the prizes on offer in these 'tournies' (including one of Carmack's very own Ferraris), it became a populist and lucrative one, with victorious gamers reaping the kudos of a rock star. The irony is that given that *Doom* is remembered mostly for 'inventing' the multiplayer experience, the multiplayer mode was almost overlooked, and rushed into the game just weeks before release.

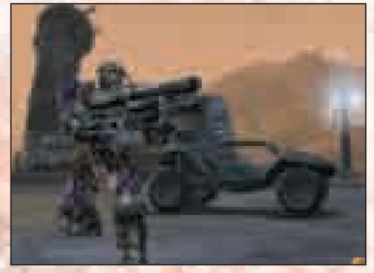
Doom was also the first game to actively encourage user-created modifications, the genesis of the modern modding community. Within months of the creation of *Doom*, assiduous coders and hackers had created a ream of mods, altering every element of the game beyond recognition. It was Carmack's vision that was again responsible for the incredible enthusiasm for *Doom* modding. The mod files (or WAD files) did not destroy the game code, they complemented it. The result was a wholly flexible and simple system that any bedroom coder could wrestle with. Many individuals now shaping the future of gaming had their passion sparked via creating their own *Doom* levels. Through the multiplayer and the modding, *Doom* had managed to forge something no other game had: a community. Gaming was no longer a guilty, antisocial pursuit. Thanks to *Doom*, it was a family.

Following up a game as trailblazing as *Doom* was an arduous task for id, and some were disillusioned that 1994's *Doom II* did not expand the series beyond a few additions. None of which mattered to the majority, however, as *Doom II* finally let gamers deathmatch via a modem; unchaining them from networks and turning the internet into a creative tool rather than an interactive reference book, as it primarily was then.

Translation is one of the finest barometers of success, and to date *Doom* has graced virtually every platform in existence. Yet while the series has proliferated, *Doom* was left in the wake of more vibrant imitation games, with console conversions being little more than ▷

Doom 3 might look more than impressive, but id's efforts to keep it under wraps means it may not meet our expectations…





Doom: Ten Million Fragged

WE'VE COME A LONG WAY, BABY

Something wicked this way comes, in the guise of *Doom 3* – the continuation of the series we have been avidly awaiting for almost a decade. In some respects, *Doom 3* is both a remake of, and homage to, the original *Doom*, albeit completely reconstructed. The atmosphere of paranoia and fear will dominate everything, and the revolutionary graphics engine will ensure that *Doom 3* radiates beauty. However, the FPS genre is saturated with games offering both beauty and terror, embodied in titles such as the *Alien Vs Predator* games. Gamers have evolved with their medium, and *Doom 3* finds itself offering action and atmosphere to an audience expecting more than just an established name; they want tactical involvement along the lines of *Halo, Battlefield 1942* and the masterful *SWAT* titles. With the recent *Unreal Tournament 2004* and *Far Cry* fulfilling the needs of gamers, and future titles such as *Half-Life 2* and *Tribes: Vengeance* whetting appetites, some see *Doom 3* as offering too little too late, save some sublimely rendered nostalgia. While tradition alone will endear *Doom 3* to many, the long-anticipated game may yet fail to make the evolving grade it was fundamental in establishing. Let it be said that the gaming world is nothing if not perverse.

Blasting 101

OR 'THE MANY DEATHS OF THE FPS'

As one of the most heavily populated genres, the first-person shooter has been plagued by more than enough mediocre offerings. So by a bizarre process of reverse engineering, we find out what made *Doom* so good and what id will need to do to keep the franchise alive and screaming today. It will need to start by not following these examples…

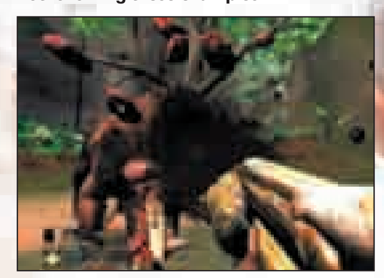


Exhibit A: Turok Evolution

When a dinosaur-man-thing (or, in fact, any enemy) goes down, the player expects, nay demands, to be able to loot the corpse for weapons and ammo, so seeing both fade away within seconds was the nail in the Dinosaur Hunter's sponsor-covered coffin. Arguably before the days of the truly demanding gamer anyway, *Doom* allowed ammo pick-ups while cunningly sidestepping the issue by virtue of the fact that many adversaries were unarmed, often literally. If you can't slice off a machine gun arm and use it for yourself in the third game, though, it could be a whole different story…

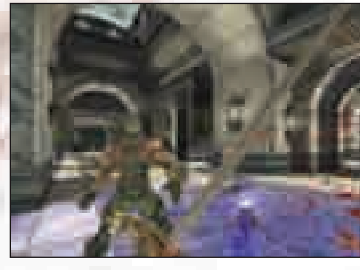


Exhibit B: Daikatana

With three years of development and some of the original *Doom* chaps behind it (including a certain Mr Romero), you'd have had every right to expect this to have been another revolution on the scale of *Quake*. Unfortunately, *Daikatana* was cursed with an incredible case of mediocrity and has forever harmed the good name of not just Romero but, indirectly, id Software, finding itself guilty by association. id's 'fall from favour' as it were (saved somewhat by 2002's very respectable *Return To Castle Wolfenstein*) may have an kind of effect on some gamers' anticipation for *Doom 3*, but we'll have to wait until its release to determine to what extent.

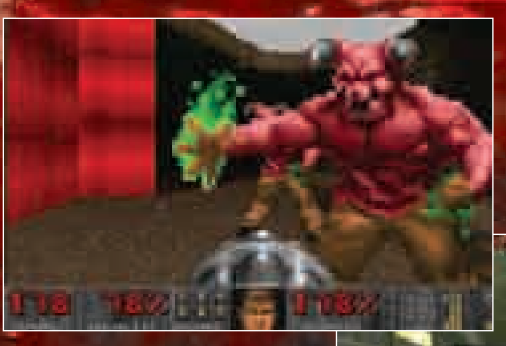
a rehash of the original *Doom*. Given that the long-term success of the *Doom* games rested on the multiplayer, the console iterations that enforced the single-player experience were destined to fail.

Hell On Earth

Perhaps the most fitting statement Romero has ever made about *Doom* is: "It has to be well timed". It certainly was, with atomic clock precision. In 1993, the PC was emerging from a chrysalis and transforming from a business machine into one that ran some astounding games. Given the somewhat costly and hardware-restrictive nature of the PC as it was then, the gaming demographic was an adult one, ensuring that genres such as adventure and strategy were the main preserve. The 'action' game was scantly represented until *Doom* appeared. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, and this maxim makes *Doom* the most flattered game in existence. Carmack's altruistic openness with his creative tools led to a rapid incursion of *Doom* clones (the source code was released to the public on 24 December 1997). *Doom*, however, has outlived its imitators with a tenacity rarely seen in contemporary gaming. While we can pinpoint it as the cause of the initial influx of 'me too' FPS titles, it was a modest 1998 game called *Half-Life* that set a new template for plot-focused, psychological action.

***Doom* has courted controversy and success in almost equal measure, and it is still one of the primary games cited when moralistic anti-gamers ascend their soapboxes; but *Doom* did not instigate the controversy over videogames – titles such as Exidy's 1976 arcade game *Death Race* have that honour. Part of the debate was that *Doom* was a 'hardcore' game, played aggressively (especially deathmatch) and intensely. While games such as *Elite* offered almost infinite hours of exploratory, profiteering pleasure, *Doom* was the complete antithesis: fast, immediate and violent. Due to the very immediacy of *Doom*, a new breed of casual gamers flocked to the bloody action. Because of *Doom*, youths were now spending hours at their computers, killing and being killed. They no longer went to the park to play in the fresh air. They played *Doom* for six- or 12-hour stretches, and parents and psychologists began to worry.**

To the non-gaming world, *Doom* is often most associated with the Columbine atrocities. On 29 April 1999, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold killed 12 classmates and one teacher at their high school in Colorado, before turning their guns on themselves. Before committing these acts, Harris recorded himself on video brandishing a shotgun and claiming "It's going to be like… *Doom*. That… shotgun is straight out of *Doom*!" Both Harris and Klebold were obsessed with the game and created their own *Doom* mods. The media, desperate for a scapegoat, blamed the game. For the



Never let it be said that the denizens of Hell didn't have the muscle to back up their efforts to conquer the world – these guys were just plain nasty.

By today's standards, *Doom* looks incredibly primitive, and yet playing for just a short time proves it's as enjoyable today as it ever was.





Would Like To Kill...

With a heavy focus on the multiplayer side of the game, *Doom* paved the way for id's creation of the FPS convention. Offering thousands in prize money and allowing gamers to BYOC (bring your own computer), such events always have huge attendances.





The legacy of *Doom* lived on with id's creation of *Quake* – a game that brought thousands of gamers together at deathmatch conventions.

critics, a violent game led to a violent act, and many swallowed that as truth, despite the frenzied protestations of millions of *Doom* enthusiasts who had never so much as killed an insect. In 2002, federal judge Lewis Babcock dismissed a lawsuit against numerous software companies supposedly 'responsible' for the Columbine tragedy. *Doom* was not engendered to make didactic points about violence. In *Doom*, Romero and Carmack wanted something 'shocking', but also something abstract and oddly detached. Of all the accusations levelled at games for their content, the Imps and Beholders of *Doom* were utterly inhuman, keeping the violence at a truly fantasy level. The gamers understood that. Society, as Columbine proves, did not.

> "The Imps and Beholders of Doom were utterly inhuman, keeping the violence at a fantasy level. Gamers understood that, society did not"

Quo Vadis, Doom?

All of this begs the question: 'What now for *Doom*?' Like a protagonist from Greek tragedy, *Doom 3* finds itself imperilled by an advanced and more cerebral gaming environment that it directly and indirectly fathered. Gaming has evolved, and developers can't afford to rest on their laurels. Despite the adoration he generates from countless gamers, Romero's 2000 FPS *Daikatana* was a failure; bloated, several years late and uninspired. Fame and nostalgia are no longer the golden tickets they once were. The future of *Doom*, however, is partly the future of all software; perhaps the question is 'will *Doom* dictate the future, or meekly follow?' Some claim that the only way for a *Doom* renaissance is for Carmack and Romero to combine their energies once more. Given that they parted ways acrimoniously after the completion of *Quake*, this seems doubtful. However, given Carmack's sense of freedom with his ideas and tools, the future of *Doom* could conceivably be third-party. Whether *Doom*, the innovator of innovators, will continue to make tectonic shifts in the future of gaming, however, is anybody's guess.

Sources: *Masters Of Doom: How Two Guys Created An Empire And Transformed Pop Culture* by David Kushner (Piatkus Books)

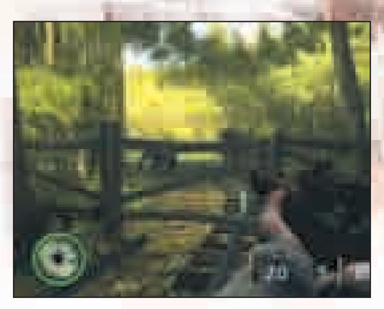


Exhibit C: Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun

'Artificial intelligence' may have been a generous way of describing the process of *Doom*'s enemies running at you and hurling globs of glowing death, so why can't the richest software developer in the world attain this level of AI in 2003? Glaring scripting errors made *Rising Sun* nigh-on farcical in places, and while the bar has been raised by the likes of *Far Cry* and *Halo*, there's still something to be said for the no-frills gung-ho approach of the first *Doom*.

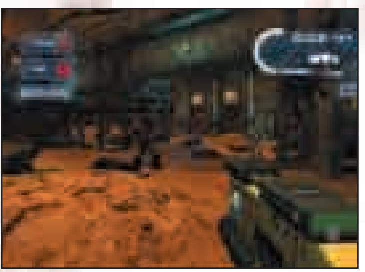


Exhibit D: Fire Warrior

Again, evolution is at fault in making corridor-based level design anachronistic among the sprawling environments of 2004. The pixelated death-bringers of the Nineties classic make the key-collecting shenanigans more acceptable, but how Kuju thought it could repackage the same experience in a shiny recreation of the Warhammer 40,000 universe and get away with it escapes us.

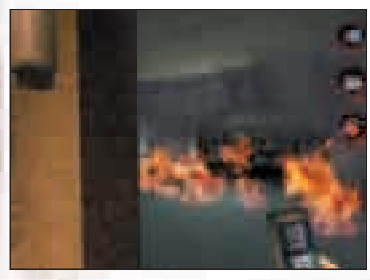
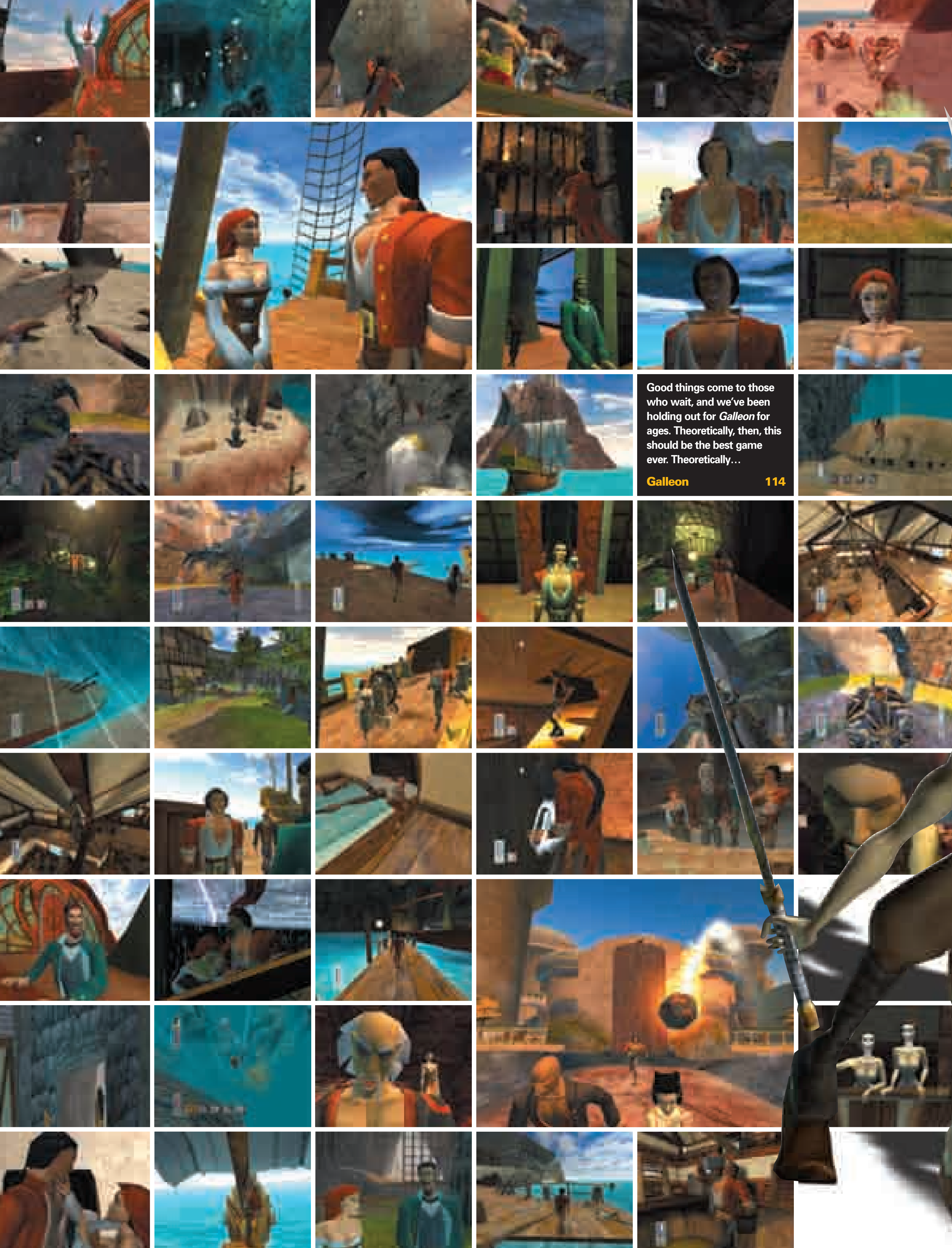


Exhibit E: Postal 2

If ever there was a game that took an idea too far, it would be *Postal 2*. So lost in its own 'hilarious' world, Running With Scissors lost all sense of gameplay elements, balance and, well, everything that makes a game fun to play and purposeful. *Doom 3*'s change in feel from frantic shooting to *System Shock*-esque thrills is fine, but if id takes things too far all hell could quite literally break loose among fans.



Good things come to those who wait, and we've been holding out for *Galleon* for ages. Theoretically, then, this should be the best game ever. Theoretically…

Galleon 114



THE AVERAGE

Despite representing an industry in which high scores mean everything, **games™** is not a magazine that marks with the majority. A lot of people think that anything below 7 (7.0, 70%, whatever) is a bad score. We don't. Going on a scale of one to ten, five is the average – average being a game that does what it sets out to do without attempting to do it better than anyone else. If a game gets five you'll get some enjoyment out of it but nothing more, simple as that. What's more, we won't be swayed by PR people telling us what a game's like – we only decide once we've played each game to death and, in the majority of cases, to completion. If a game's bad we'll make sure you know; if it's great we'll sing its praises. At the end of the day, we're just here to help you decide what's worth your hard-earned cash. After all, if it wasn't for you, we'd be out of a job.

games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

MASTER OF DISGUISE: Agent 47 can steal victims' clothes, letting him assume different identities.

DIRECT APPROACH: With numerous methods of killing your marks, you can experiment in each level.





SO MANY DECISIONS, SO FEW LIVES TO TAKE…

HITMAN: CONTRACTS

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2, PC

ORIGIN
Denmark

PUBLISHER
Eidos

DEVELOPER
IO Interactive

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1



A little bit of claret goes a long way in videogames, but it's a shame that a handful of titles hog all the attention by showcasing their overly-violent wares. Thanks to Rockstar, for instance, the whole world knows of *Grand Theft Auto*'s shotgun-wielding, car-stealing, hooker-murdering tendencies and yet they pale in comparison against something as genuinely brutal as *Hitman: Contracts*. That may be because most games don't require much forethought when it comes to violence – a quick press of a button here, a splatter of brains there – while *Contracts* requests, nay demands, that you start thinking in a genuinely ruthless and calculated fashion about what you're doing before you even draw your gun from its holster.

Not that we're complaining, of course; it's the very reason why *Contracts* (and the *Hitman* series in general) is so enjoyable. Staying out of sight, avoiding suspicion, killing people before they even know you're coming – it's like *Splinter Cell*, only with less sticking to the shadows and more dressing up in other people's clothes after mercilessly killing them in a variety of ways. Storming in with all guns blazing might seem like an option initially, but with the emphasis on trying to make things as realistic as possible (or at least as realistic as they can be, given that you're meant to be a cloned soldier with a talent for offing people without question), such actions usually lead to you being outnumbered by enemies, swiftly followed by an early death. Unsurprisingly, a successful hit requires slightly more care and attention…

There are many different ways to achieve what is ultimately the same end – how you decide to carry out each job (and then actually do so without getting caught) is where the skill really lies. Do you steal a bomb and surreptitiously attach it to the getaway vehicle of a known Triad sympathiser, or find a vantage point and take him out with your sniper rifle? Should you poison the whisky of a wealthy huntsman and watch your mark die a slow, agonising death, or pour petrol down the chimney onto the roaring fire he's sitting beside and turn him into a human torch? The fact that you can make such choices during each

FAQs

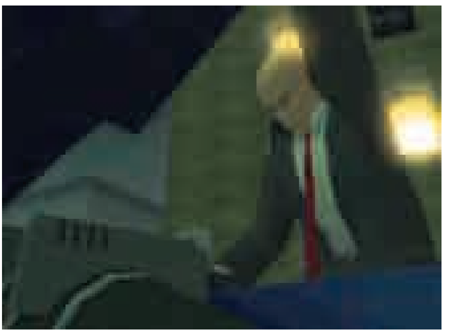
Q. MANY MISSIONS?
Only 12 in total, although many of those offer several different ways of completing them which effectively increases that number… sort of.

Q. GUNS BLAZING?
You can approach each job that way, but that's not really the point – you're meant to be silent but deadly and being so comes with its own rewards.

Q. LIKE WHAT?
The more covert you are, the higher your stealth ranking will be – if you can achieve the top level for each job, you'll get bonus weapons for the next one.

■ The map is your friend – you'll need to use it to keep tabs on where your target is.









Rule number one of being a hitman – guns are made of metal. Better find another way inside that tightly guarded hotel then…



CONSUMMATE PROFESSIONAL

Proving you're a true Hitman depends on which difficulty level you play. Most people will start off on Normal, which gives you plenty of leeway as far as help goes – occasional hints will appear at the top of the screen; the map shows detailed locations for enemies, targets and points of interest; and you get seven chances to save the game along the way. Move up to Expert and things get tougher as the AI moves up a notch, while the map markers give less information about who's who. However, it's on Professional that things really get nasty – with no indication of enemy locations and no chances to save mid-mission, it'll take a lot of skill to make it through each job unscathed.

mission opens up a wealth of opportunities for those willing to spend the time exploring each avenue – more often than not, a little patience reveals something new to try out that could make things much easier.

Sounds good, doesn't it? Well, yes… but if you've already dallied with the *Hitman* series then it won't be particularly ground-breaking news – such antics have been the staples of Agent 47's last two adventures, so to expect anything new would be pointless. Instead, it's probably better to ask how *Contracts* improves on the last game. While we'd like to remain positive here, the simple truth is that it doesn't. This isn't exactly bad news – after all, *Hitman 2* was very enjoyable, if rather tricky – but *Hitman: Contracts* ends up feeling like filler material in anticipation for the next instalment rather than the full-blown sequel we'd hoped for.

This could, of course, be because *Contracts* is an amalgamation of *Hitman 2*'s engine (in terms of graphics, physics and textures) and most of the level designs from the original *Hitman* on the PC. And yes, we do mean the exact level designs, albeit with a sprinkling of new objectives and a few other alterations. Certainly, the fact that the game's rather badly explained story has Agent 47 suffering flashbacks does go some way to explaining it, but the whole thing smacks of laziness – of the game's 12 missions, we count a total of four completely new ones which, considering the remaining eight levels are relatively small, isn't great. On top of that, you've got a host of grating technical flaws (despite they're not that detrimental to the gameplay); from weapons occasionally glitching through doors (alerting any passing guards to your presence,



obviously) and Agent 47 almost sliding across the floor like he's on an ice rink, this third outing for the series doesn't feel quite as polished as the last one.

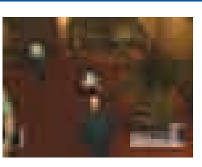
Despite all this, the annoying thing is that *Contracts* is an enjoyable game; that IO had the cheek to crib from its previous work almost doesn't matter when the result is still worth playing. Yes, so we'd like to bring the score down as a result but the fact remains that a good game is a good game regardless. But this does make us slightly wary of how the next game will turn out. Could we have a bit more effort next time?



VERDICT 7/10
A SLIGHTLY LAZY EFFORT, BUT STILL ENJOYABLE



PS2 £39.99 OUT NOW



Although the game hardly suffers in the graphics department, there is a horrible amount of additional loading and memory card access time to put up with. Bring a book or something.

PC £29.99 OUT NOW



It's the usual story here – the game looks great, but there are some concerns over clipping and you'll definitely need a joypad for a more accurate killing experience.

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PC

ORIGIN
Poland

PUBLISHER
Dreamcatcher Games

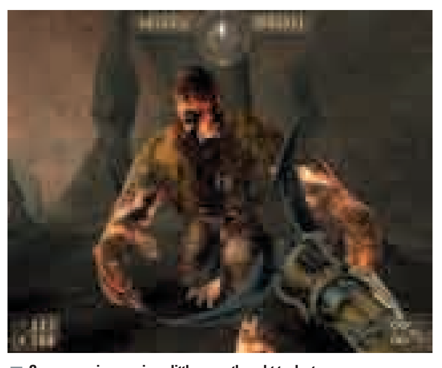
DEVELOPER
People Can Fly

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1 (1-16 Online)

MINIMUM SPEC
1.5GHz processor, 384Mb RAM, 1.2Gb HDD space, 64Mb DirectX 9-compatible graphics card



Some enemies require a little more thought to destroy.



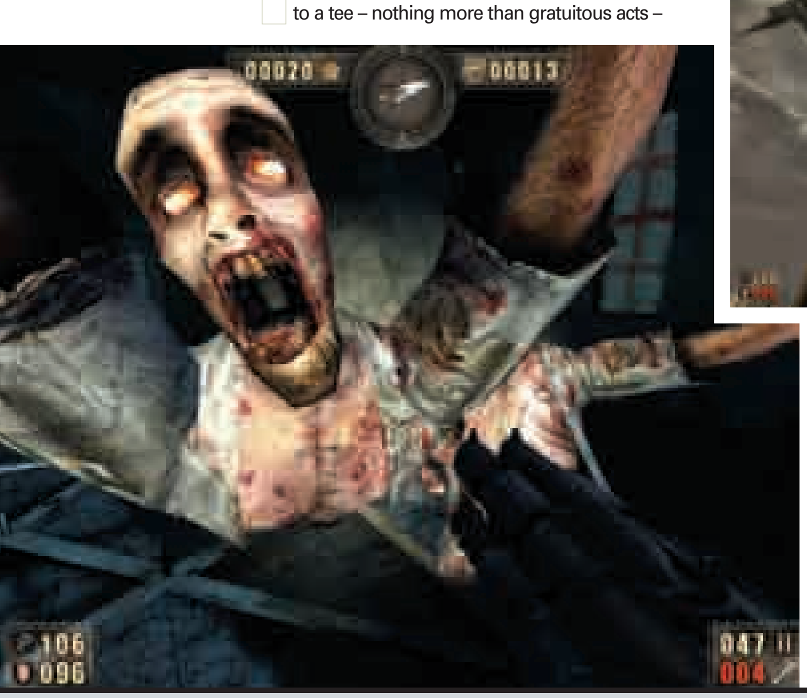
Collecting 66 souls puts you into a usefully invincible 'demon' state.

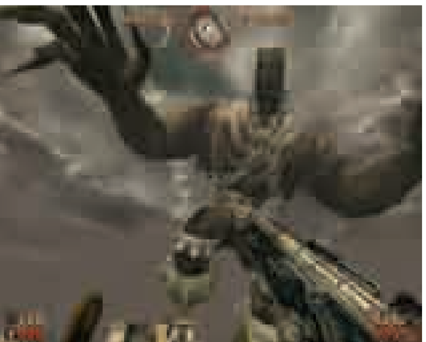
PAINKILLER

SHOOT FIRST AND TO HELL WITH THE QUESTIONS

Argue all you want about today's games lacking depth, but it's human nature to enjoy the satisfaction provided by wanton destruction and irreverent behaviour. The smug grin of a headshot in *Resident Evil*, the pummelling of a deceased hooker in *GTA III*, that insistent urge to shoot your own teammates in nearly every co-op game – all unnecessary yet strangely pleasing acts. Of course, such events are usually incidental to what you're supposed to be doing, most likely because filling a game with nothing but gratuitous acts that require little thought would get boring for even the most decadent gamer. Or so you'd think.

Considering that description sums up *Painkiller* to a tee – nothing more than gratuitous acts – there must be a flaw in the logic somewhere. True, the epitome of the modern FPS game has developed in recent years to incorporate stealth, strategy and realism, but, by comparison, *Painkiller* is a veritable caveman and doesn't make any claims to the contrary. Whittling the roots of FPS gaming down to almost nothing, what remains might look incredibly pretty but it manages to make *Doom* look complicated. There's no extensive exploration, no buttons to press or doors to unlock, and certainly no reason to use your brain besides finding the next checkpoint – just you, enough ammunition to level Cuba and hordes of enemies waiting to taste the business end of your Stakegun.



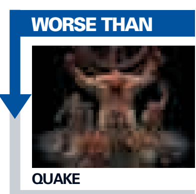


SERIOUS SAM



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



QUAKE

IT'S ON THE CARDS

Each level in *Painkiller* has a hidden goal for you to reach, such as only using a certain weapon, destroying all breakable objects, collecting a certain amount of Gold and so on. Achieve that goal and you'll earn a gold or silver Black Tarot card. These cards can then be placed on the Black Tarot board (essentially the game's power-up system) in exchange for Gold and used mid-game to enhance your abilities; gold cards last for a short period of time, while silver ones are permanent and generally have more interesting effects. Black Tarot cards can also be found hidden in the most unlikely places around levels – the harder it is to get a card, the better it usually turns out to be.



games™

GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

FREE FOR ALL: *Painkiller*'s multiplayer recreates the frantic blasting pioneered by games like *Doom*.

SPICE IT UP: Some original modes such as Voosh and Light Bearer help keep things interesting.

The Stakegun is the most satisfying weapon – why not pin some enemies together?

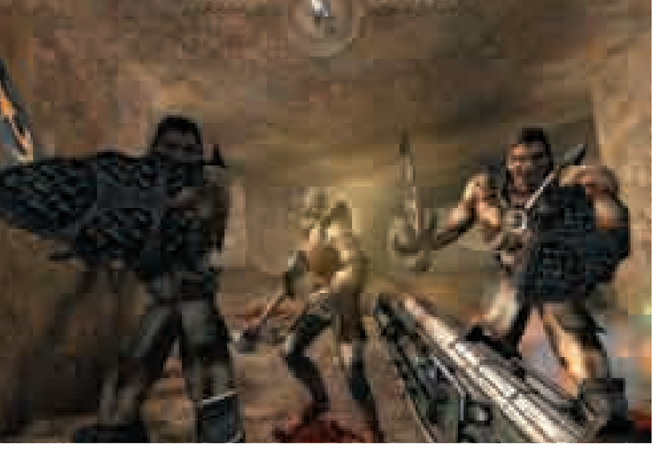
There's plenty of variety in the settings, but some don't make sense; why would you be fighting the legions of Hell in an opera house?

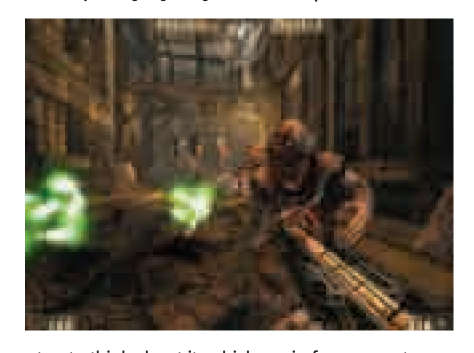
FAQs

Q. BIT BASIC, ISN'T IT?
Yes – but that's the point. If the adventuring aspect was expanded you'd lose the frantic edge gained by going up against hordes of enemies.

Q. ONLY FIVE WEAPONS?
Not really. Each has an alternative firing mode, which makes a single weapon two guns in one; these can be combined for combo attacks.

Q. MULTIPLAYER?
Offering more than enough gibbage for your dollar, *Painkiller*'s multiplayer side is *Doom* resurrected – although a number of new modes keep things moving along nicely.





Whether that's a bad thing or not depends on your definition of 'bad'. Certainly, it makes *Painkiller* a structural one-trick pony. Each of the 24 levels sees the same mix of you moving into an area, various doors or walls slamming into place and then all hell breaking loose (literally), leaving you to blast anything that moves before heading onto the next area. The enemy AI is also fairly rudimentary, with almost every monster gunning straight for you as soon as it materialises and not relenting until you put a bullet through its brain. Those that don't usually only serve to make your life harder by teaming up with fellow hellspawn – Leper Monks pelt you with the bodies of dead companions, Zombie Warlords decapitate Zombie Warriors, sending them into a violent frenzy and so on – but there's no getting away from the fact that everyone wants your blood.

Obviously, you do have a fighting chance thanks to the weapons on offer, and while there are only five in the game, each has two different firing modes, representing a valuable two-for-one deal. What's more, the different modes can be combined to devastating effect – the Shotgun/Freezer, for instance, encases enemies in ice before shattering them into bloody pieces, while you can catapult lightning-charged clusters of shurikens using the Electrodriver. However, it's the Stakegun that will undoubtedly become the favourite, as the appeal of using it to pin enemies to walls, ceilings or even each other never seems to fade.

But there's the rub – it's only by revelling in the same destructive acts over and over that *Painkiller*'s intensely repetitive gameplay can be saved from being written off after less than an hour's play. While it's clear that a great deal of effort has gone into the visuals (which look incredible if you've got the right hardware), not to mention the physics engine that throws enemies around at an alarming rate, much of the game (from the virtually non-existent plot to the level locales that fail to blend with one another) doesn't make sense if you stop to think about it, which again forces you to take a decidedly brainless approach to the proceedings. As a celebration of the FPS genre's base instincts, *Painkiller* crosses the finish line in first place; anything more than that and it doesn't even make it out of the blocks.

Still, there's no denying that as People Can Fly's first title, this is a valiant effort. While those who like their FPS outings a little more cerebral will no doubt pick holes in it, *Painkiller* more than delivers on what it promises. Okay, it doesn't promise much, but it's always made that clear. If you just expect an overwhelming flood of carnage and destruction, you'll find plenty to keep you grinning inanely.

VERDICT 7/10

SIMPLE BUT EFFECTIVE – TRUE OLD-SCHOOL GAMEPLAY





DEAD TO RIGHTS



BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS

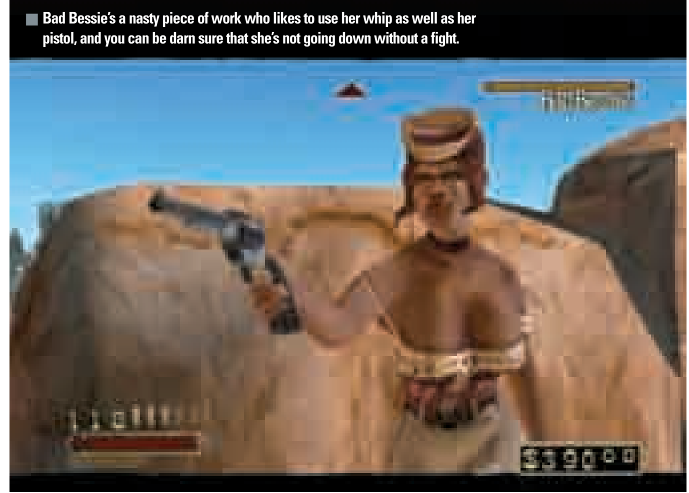


MAX PAYNE 2

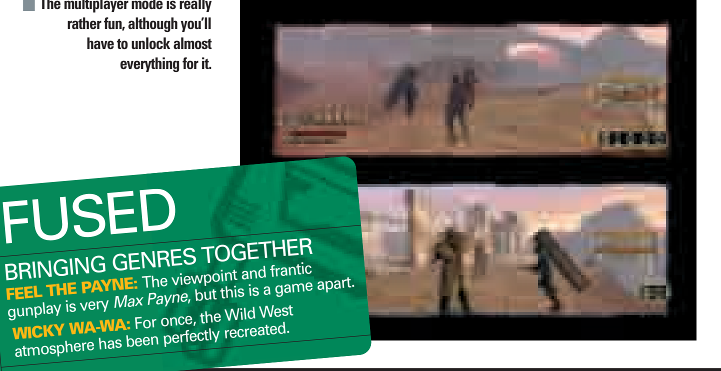
RED DEAD REVOLVER

ROCKSTAR CONQUERS THE WILD WEST WITH A RESOUNDING YEE AND, INDEED, HAW

Bad Bessie's a nasty piece of work who likes to use her whip as well as her pistol, and you can be darn sure that she's not going down without a fight.



The multiplayer mode is really rather fun, although you'll have to unlock almost everything for it.



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Rockstar Games

DEVELOPER
Rockstar San Diego

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
28 May

PLAYERS
1-4

If there's one area of game design where Rockstar has proven itself king during its relatively short life, it's atmosphere. From *Vice City*'s neon-lined streets and *Midnight Club II*'s seedy-but-hip underground racing gangs to the tormented soul of *Max Payne* or the intensely dark and brooding snuff-fest *Manhunt*, the nail has had its head hit every time… even if, in a couple of cases, it's debatable whether the gameplay has been of the same quality. However, what makes playing *Red Dead Revolver* all the more enjoyable is the fact that where other Rockstar games have failed, this one delivers on virtually all its promises.

How much that has to do with Capcom's original input before the purchase of Angel Studios (now Rockstar San Diego) isn't clear, but the stamping of Rockstar's influence all over this game is very much to the title's credit. Once again, it's a matter of ambience, and whereas most other efforts based on the genre have tried to incorporate a Wild West style into the format of a game, *Red Dead* gets it right by adding game elements to what could almost be a fully-fledged Western in its own right instead. It's a subtle

games™

FUSED

BRINGING GENRES TOGETHER

FEEL THE PAYNE: The viewpoint and frantic gunplay is very *Max Payne*, but this is a game apart.

WICKY WA-WA: For once, the Wild West atmosphere has been perfectly recreated.

DRAW, PILGRIM

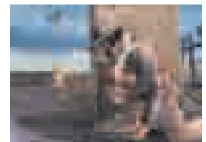
While the majority of the action in *Red Dead Revolver* is focused on third-person blasting, there are times when only a good old-fashioned duel will do. Naturally tense affairs with very little room for error, taking part is relatively simple: you flick down on the right analogue stick to lower your hand, flick back up to draw your gun, then aim for your opponent's vitals and pull the Right Trigger to blow him away. Unfortunately, winning is slightly harder – not only does your aim have to be true enough to score enough critical hits, but flicking the stick too quickly can cause Red to clumsily drop his gun. More haste, less speed, as the saying goes…

Red's finances jump according to how accurate you are – score multiple hits on the more vital areas and you'll rack up those dollars.



Red's Dead Eye ability lets him lock up to six hits on an opponent in one slow-motion sequence before unleashing a single barrage of hot lead.

PS2 £39.99 28 MAY



The usual suspects here – much longer loading and memory-card access times, plus you'll need a multi-tap for four-player Showdown action.

FAQs

Q. VERY LONG?
Not overly, although some fights require you to think a bit. Unlocking everything will take some time, though.

Q. WHY?
Because there's loads – 47 multiplayer characters, plenty of Showdown levels and detailed journal entries for every person, place and weapon in the game.

Q. BEST BIT?
Probably the chapter that sees Red chasing General Diego's armoured train on horseback, leaping on-board at vital points to take out each carriage.

difference, but combined with Rockstar's trademark aptitude for characterisation, the results are completely at odds with almost everything we've seen before. From the first guitar twang of the opening act and the grainy visuals that only Western movies have, to the multitude of Wild West stereotypes on offer (Red with his chiselled features, gravelly voice and dark past, and the evil Mexican rebel General Diego to name just two) the whole game is impeccably presented and encapsulates the spaghetti western style of the late Sixties and early Seventies to a tee.

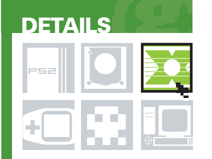
But the feather in *Red Dead*'s ten-gallon cap is that it has more than enough gritty firepower and intense action to back up the Western stylings. Taking cues from both *Max Payne* and the *GTA* series at times, *Red Dead*'s third-person gameplay is actually deeper than it might first appear. Certainly, sending Red in with all barrels blazing is the most obvious approach but it's also one you'll have learnt to use with caution after just the first few chapters. Instead, the art of finding cover and using it to your advantage, aiming for precise hits instead of mere trigger-happy behaviour, and using long-range (but slow-firing) weapons soon becomes second nature. This in itself changes the face of the gameplay, but the game also manages to alternate between the many different styles of play on offer (basic blasting, duelling, horse-riding, hand-to-hand brawling and even simplified stealth) without ever feeling disjointed, all of which ends up producing what can only be described as a very enjoyable experience.

Unfortunately, there is a problem – when we say that *Red Dead* is a great little game, the emphasis is as much on the 'little' as it is on the 'great'. The worst thing is that, on paper, *Red Dead*'s size seems to be to its benefit, with 27 individual chapters, six different playable characters in the main Story mode and a whole host of unlockable secrets. What that doesn't tell you, however, is that most of the stages are relatively short and, in some cases, can be over in as little as two minutes, meaning you'll have Red riding off into the sunset sooner than you might like. True, there are two additional modes that unlock once you complete the game (a harder difficulty and Bounty Hunter, which adds new objectives to the original levels) but as they only build on top of what's already there rather than add anything completely new, it's a mite disappointing. That you can't revisit past chapters to better your score and unlock missed bonuses besides replaying a stage immediately after completing it the first time is also rather grating – with no scope for improvement short of playing through the whole game again, the point of rating your performance in the first place is pretty much negated.

That said, it's actually quite hard to find fault with the *Red Dead* package. All the normal issues that we've had with Rockstar games in the past seem to be absent, and even the multiplayer mode – which could have been a disaster given the third-person viewpoint – is really good fun once you've unlocked some of the additional characters and levels. While we doubt *Red Dead Revolver* will reach the heights of *GTA*, Rockstar has set the foundation stone for what could very well be a promising franchise. Here's hoping Red's adventures continue for a long time to come.



DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
Sweden

PUBLISHER
Microsoft

DEVELOPER
Digital Illusions CE

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out now

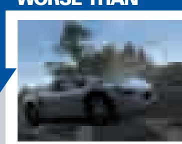
PLAYERS
1-16

COLIN MCRAE RALLY '04



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 2

AND THIS WEEK'S SHOW-STOPPING XBOX TITLE IS…

RALLISPORT CHALLENGE 2

If there's one thing that polarises the opinions of racing game fans, it's realism. While some will hanker after a game that tries to emulate the way a real vehicle behaves, others just want to experience the thrill of putting insanely fast cars through their paces. If you're one of the latter, then forget the other racers because your chariot has arrived. The original *RalliSport Challenge* is one of the Xbox's hidden gems as it was overshadowed at launch by the *Halo*s, *Project Gotham Racing*s and *Dead Or Alive 3*s of this world. Perhaps this is why anyone who actually picked up the first instalment acts as if they're privy to a well-kept console secret, content to let the rest of the world fiddle with *Colin McRae* and *V-Rally*. But now DICE is ready to unveil another jewel for Microsoft's racing crown, so try not to miss this one…

RalliSport Challenge 2 is one of the most honest games available on any console. There's no filler or pretence in the game – no unnecessary extras included so that the publisher has an extra couple of features to list on the box. So when it's taken into account that this game has a total of 238 unlockable items, with many more planned for download via Xbox Live, this becomes high praise for a title that has received a criminally small amount of coverage in the past few months. The game itself is enormous, as it allows you to compete in five styles of racing – rally, rallisport, rally cross, hill climbs and ice racing. And though each discipline is fairly similar to the next, the most striking thing about these races is that they are intensely quick, inviting comparisons with *Burnout 2* rather than any other rally title. Thankfully, the speed comes at the cost of realistic handling, allowing the player to rip around the tracks with maximum enjoyment and minimum frustration, making *RalliSport 2* one of the few games that provides enjoyment even in defeat.

Although the lack of realism may upset rally purists, you will need plenty of skill as the car will still behave according to the conditions and road surface. If you travel through a muddy patch after racing on tarmac, for instance, you'll notice the car slow down and slide around. As such, until you really get familiar with the myriad cars on offer (including the much-loved Subaru Impreza WRX and Lancia models) you probably won't appreciate just how great the game looks. Although the tracks are not based on real locations, the use of rich colours and wonderfully designed environments

FAQs

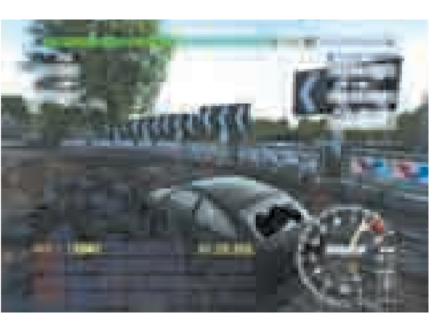
Q. BETTER THAN COLIN MCRAE RALLY 04? REALLY?
Although not as technically minded, the thrills here are matched only by *Burnout 2*.

Q. SURELY THE LOADING TIMES ARE MASSIVE?
The first few loads are annoyingly lengthy, but after these the wait between races is surprisingly short.

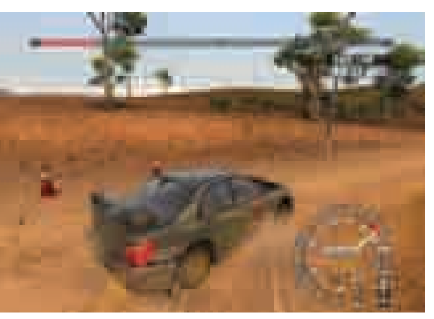
Q. I HEAR THE SOUNDTRACK IS ROCK. WHAT IF I LIKE WESTLIFE?
The soundtrack represents the savage nature of rally, but if you don't like it *RalliSport 2* supports the Custom soundtrack feature.



Expect other racers to be green with envy at the sheer magnitude of this car's spoiler. Other, more sensible, add-ons are available, however. The number of cars to choose from is phenomenal, though you'll need to take a few minutes to familiarise yourself with each one.



Damage depends on the sort of crash you have – get shunted from behind and your 'big end' will start to look a bit sorry for itself.



This game is the undisputed daddy of 'eat my dust jokes' as it has the finest dust-cloud effects of any rally title.



TWISTED METAL IS BACK

Forget the way you can crumple your bonnet on *Gotham*'s Nürburgring, *RalliSport 2* has been taking notes from *Burnout 2* when it comes to car damage. At development stage the vehicles are split into sections, each of which can show damage in a realistic way according to the way they are affected. Slam a tree into your side panel and the door will cave in; flip your car and the windscreen will pop out, spreading glass over the track for other racers to giggle at. During more spectacular prangs you'll be treated to a glorious animation as your car spins and flips, shedding bodywork as it flies. Crash enthusiasts will also be pleased to know that a full-screen replay is available to capture the carnage through any number of camera angles.



ensures that the worlds of *RalliSport Challenge 2* carry an even greater wow factor than those of *PGR2*. On occasions the draw distance can prove a problem, but when driving the world's fastest cars around dirt tracks and mountain sides it always pays to keep an eye on the road rather than the scenery. As an aside to this, fans of the original title will be pleased to hear that the auto-reset is much more lenient, enabling players to partake in off-road driving and the occasional short cut.

In addition to the single-player game – which could potentially occupy owners for months – *RalliSport 2* has plenty of multiplayer functions to keep itself fresh. Although there is only so much that can be done with a racing game online, the good people at DICE have ensured that the most has been made of the subject matter. As such, *RalliSport 2* supports up to 16 players online, manoeuvring carefully around the issue of lag and lack of track space by ghosting out cars in games with over four players. This feature is a mixed blessing in terms of the overall online racing experience, as on one hand it ensures there can be double the number of players in one race than is available in any other online racing title; on the other, however, this cuts down on the potential for dirty racing tactics, and makes the game appear less visually impressive. However, if there are only four players involved, *RalliSport*'s online experience takes some beating.



Let's see you three-point turn your way out of this one then…

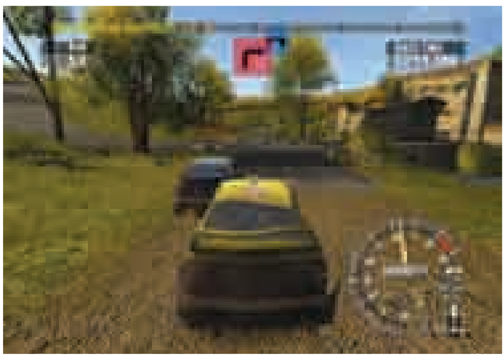


It may not look flashy, but in a tough rallisport race the Volvo is a must.



games™ GLOBAL
TAKING GAMING ONLINE
EXTRA!: Online racing can take part over any of the game's extensive tracks, some of which are over 20km long. The game also has scoreboards, ghost times, XSN support and future content downloads.

As it happens, the same could be said about most of the components of this game, as they represent the golden age of the Xbox's life so far. Everything here has been thoughtfully crafted and implemented, from the superb damage engine through to the realistic lighting effects, right down to the way the on-site commentator will describe what's happening on rallisport tracks in real time. Even though it's arrived mere months after games like *PGR2* and *Colin McRae 04*, *RalliSport 2* is making these 'revolutionary racers' look a little dated and, quite frankly, very slow.



VERDICT 8/10
RALLY THRILLS WITH EXCITEMENT AND PASSION



DETAILS

FORMAT
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
SCEE

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

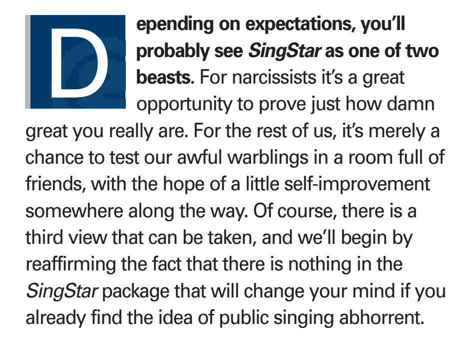
RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2



SINGSTAR

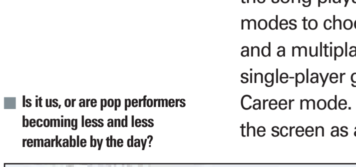
RITUAL HUMILIATION HAS NEVER FELT SO GOOD…



Depending on expectations, you'll probably see *SingStar* as one of two beasts. For narcissists it's a great opportunity to prove just how damn great you really are. For the rest of us, it's merely a chance to test our awful warblings in a room full of friends, with the hope of a little self-improvement somewhere along the way. Of course, there is a third view that can be taken, and we'll begin by reaffirming the fact that there is nothing in the *SingStar* package that will change your mind if you already find the idea of public singing abhorrent.

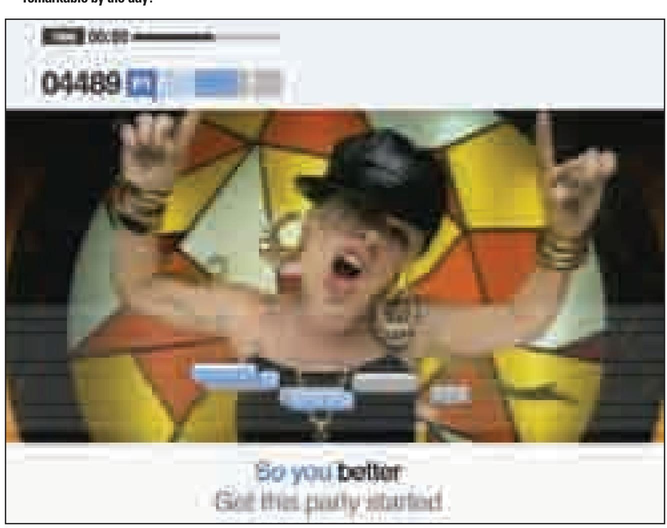
The rules are as simple as they come; just grab a mic and sing along to one of 29 tracks included in the package (the game comes with two mics and a USB hub), while the original video for the song plays on screen. There are a number of modes to choose from (karaoke, scored challenges and a multiplayer game), with the main bulk of the single-player game devoted to the obligatory Career mode. Here, target notes are relayed across the screen as a pitch-specific tablature, with the player's efforts transcribed over the ideal vocal path. Good performances are rewarded with Buzz points that accumulate with each gig to unlock bigger, more Buzzworthy venues; bad efforts are savaged by your peers and family members until all dignity is lost. And that's basically all there is to it – though that isn't to suggest *SingStar*'s simplicity is a flaw. It's obvious that Sony would like everyone – even non-gamers – to be able to throw themselves into the party spirit, and the only impediments are unfamiliarity with the songs and plain old tone-deafness.

With such a varied track selection (ranging from The Darkness to George Michael to, ahem, Busted) you'd be hard pressed not to have heard most of the choices on offer. However, repeated performances of the same song in Career mode can result in audiences tiring of it and venue owners removing it from your set list, so at some point you're going to have to sing something you despise. While we can understand the real-life discipline Sony is trying to parallel, if we'd wanted



Is it us, or are pop performers becoming less and less remarkable by the day?

It's amazing how many lyrics are just gibberish when you see them written down…







Can you record an even more soulless cover of *Eternal Flame* than these ladies?



SEE MY SONG

It was always a worry that the EyeToy would become just another peripheral which lacked software support and ended up gathering dust in a cupboard somewhere. So to see a title such as *SingStar* support the PS2 camera comes as a relief – even if it was coded by a first-party team. Turning on the EyeToy replaces the video that would otherwise appear on screen with your own performance, and key notes are saved as snapshots to view later. It's a novel idea, though in practice it makes performing a far more self-conscious affair – the developer has tended to highlight the highest or toughest notes, resulting in a snapshot that makes the player look like they're in the middle of a particularly painful bowel movement.

games™ CONNECTED
EXPANDING THE GAMEPLAY
LIKE MIC: Two mics are included, though don't expect cross-compatibility with many other products.
EYETOY: Watch yourself perform in real time for that special cringe factor.



A classic artist, and a classic song you can actually sing along to without gargling the notes.

to sing songs we didn't like we would have joined S Club. That said, anyone who can throw self esteem to the wind and enjoy the vibe (the game's target audience, then) probably won't care too much.

There are bigger criticisms to be made, though. For starters, the code doesn't award points for singing the lyrics as well as notes, and a tuneful hum is as good as a soulful recital, which is bound to upset any diva competing against a room of blah-blah-ing illiterates. Secondly, the songs have all been transcribed one note at a time, and therefore often require you to sing more rigidly than the original artist – try knocking out a rendition of *Ace Of Spades* just like Lemmy and you'll see what we mean. Additionally, while great care has been taken to transcribe each note correctly, the tab onscreen doesn't bend notes, so you'll often be penalised for singing with flair, even if your performance is indistinguishable from the original. Of course, this again relates to discipline; it's hard to sing *Suspicious Minds* without turning into a lame Elvis impersonator, and many singers will find their mid-Atlantic twang needs un-learning if they're to succeed. The final letdown in *SingStar*, though, is in multiplayer. As well as a competitive game there's a Duet mode, but as there's no opportunity for singing harmonies, the result sounds more like a terrace anthem than a multi-layered ballad.

We know these are probably hollow criticisms – that *SingStar* has been designed to primarily appeal to post-pub rabbles lubricated beyond the desire to perform impressively. But the key factor here is that while it serves this demographic very nicely, it misses the opportunity to be a tool for improving your voice – if you sound dire the first time you play, there's nothing in the game which will see you get better, especially as you'll be judging your pitch by a marker the width of a sausage rather than by infinitesimal degrees. However, as a party game *SingStar* is hard to beat, and should be welcomed as yet another attempt by Sony to broaden the games market to appeal to a wider audience.

FAQs

Q. WHAT IF I CAN'T SING?
Don't worry – there are three difficulty levels, so you can protect your pride by being marked less harshly.

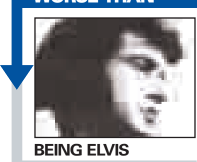
Q. ARE THE SONGS TOUGH?
Most songs are in a more lady-friendly key, though you can sing an octave lower or higher if necessary.

Q. HOW LONG WILL IT OCCUPY THE KIDS FOR?
Well, provided they like pop music then you'll definitely have a fight on your hands come bedtime.

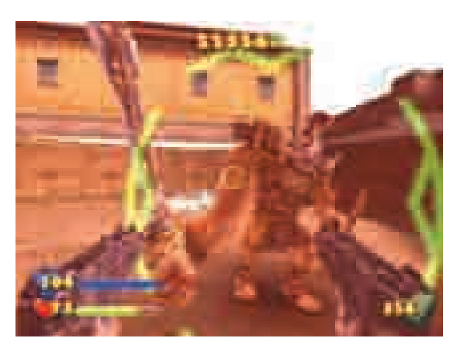
VERDICT 7/10
A FUN GAME BUT A FLAWED SINGING TUTOR

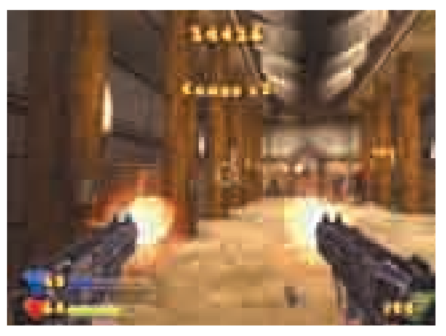
KARAOKE STAGE

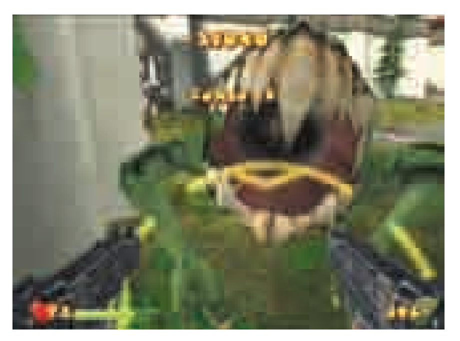
AS GOOD AS

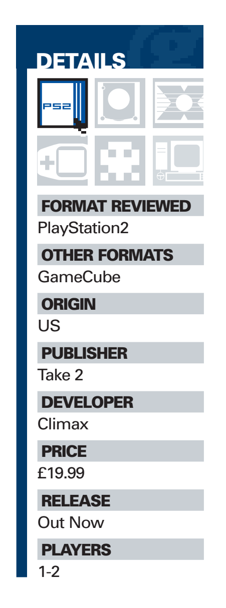
WORSE THAN

BEING ELVIS


eMag


What enemies lack in detail they make up for in numbers or strength.


Some texture detail has been improved, but it's mostly a barren land.


Don't like the lack of character geometry? You've missed the point…



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
GameCube

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Take 2

DEVELOPER
Climax

PRICE
£19.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1-2

BECAUSE DUKE NUKEM WAS A BAD JOKE WRIT FAR TOO LARGE?

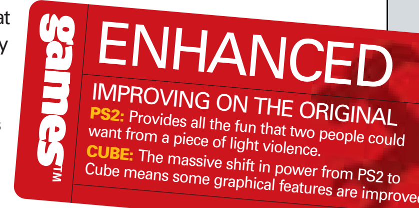
SERIOUS SAM: NEXT ENCOUNTER

Quadraphonic pre-textural light-mapped blades of grass billow in a wind born of a million computations a second where every lick of thermal air is described by a software/hardware double-team. The poetry of mathematics written on silicon, it has changed the way we view the digital arena that many of us call home. Its taming is the future, and *Serious Sam: Next Encounter* is looking every bit the nemesis of the holy grail that is *Halo 2*.

By trying to compete in the 'ultimate first-person shooter' squabble, many a title finds its grasp underplayed by its reach. The beauty of *Serious Sam* is its totally nonchalant attitude toward the genre and the way it plays what could be seen as its weakest card as its strength. Artificial intelligence is of the 'lock on and attack' variety where each enemy displays one attack style (usually hurtling towards you while firing whatever it has) and you therefore have one defensive manoeuvre – get out of the way and shoot back. The lack of pretension in the combat is underlined by the simplistic, vibrant landscapes and sheer number of assailants making this as comparative to *Halo* as *R-Type* is to the moon landings.

Unlike Duke Nukem – whose humour was aimed at lowering the hero to mere coagulated testosterone – Sam's gag is as much in the construction of the game itself as it is in his banal mutterings. Does it matter more that you're fighting giant robots in an ancient Roman setting, or that you can drive an armoured vehicle around an antiquity where your foe is a swarm of jawed eyes? If Serious Software ever made an FPS you know it would play with this much irreverence. And you'd know that it would have this level of quality.

What *Serious Sam* shows is that a shoot-'em-up is fundamentally daft and can be just as fun if you're up against creatures with the combined intelligence of *Pac-Man*'s Inky, Blinky and Clyde, or if you're toe-to-toe with Captain Dale Dye in a minefield. It plays by simple rules, and plays well even if what it plays is little more than a game of 'kill 'em all, perhaps find a key? move on'. As a two-player experience this simple mechanic falls into the background as memories of blasters long gone come floating back. If melted into wax, *Sam*'s depth couldn't form a candle to hold up to modern titles, but that's the point. This is a perfect five for all the right reasons.



games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

PS2: Provides all the fun that two people could want from a piece of light violence.
CUBE: The massive shift in power from PS2 to Cube means some graphical features are improved.

GC £19.99 OUT NOW

Four players on screen at once? Why isn't this part of the PS2 experience? Graphics are still a bit ropey, mind. An Amazon reviewer compares this to *Metroid Prime* and is disappointed. Here's a clue: THEY'RE DIFFERENT GAMES.



VERDICT 5/10
PERFECTLY AVERAGE, AND WE MEAN 'PERFECTLY'



SERIOUS SAM

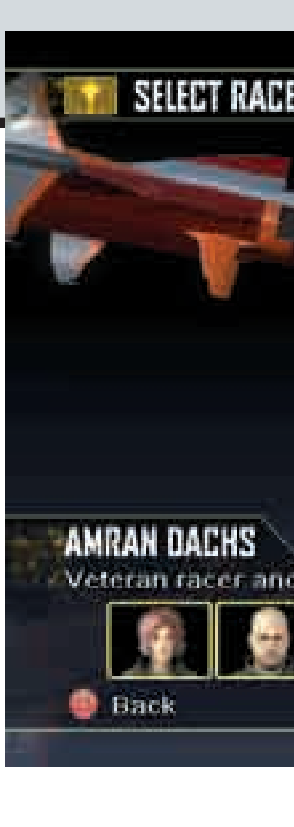
BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

TIMESPLITTERS 2

IS A NEED FOR SPEED STILL ENOUGH TO MAKE A DECENT RACER?

POWERDROME





DETAILS

FORMAT
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
Evolved Games

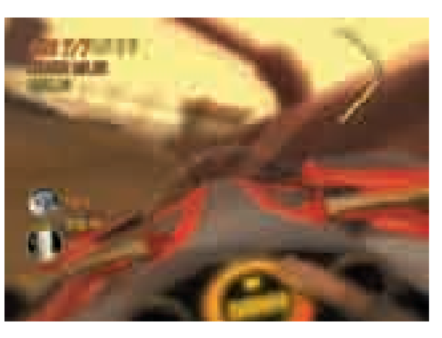
DEVELOPER
Argonaut Sheffield

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
May '04

PLAYERS
1-4 (1-8 online)



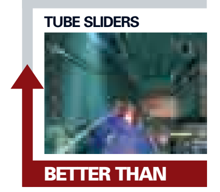


If you were an Amiga or Atari ST owner, chances are *Powerdrome* is a name that's already familiar to you. Created by Michael Powell, the original Electronic Arts classic inspired titles like Psygnosis' *WipEout* and proved just how advanced 16-bit games had become when compared to their 8-bit peers. Powell has returned with an all-new update and while the game's development team is significantly larger (Powell created the original on his own) the majority of the game's mechanics have remained largely untouched. Once again, *Powerdrome* finds us in the not-too-distant future and features a backstory that's as generic as every *F-Zero* and *WipEout* title of the last few years. Nevertheless, with hardly any competition around on the Xbox and PS2 at the moment, Powell's revival has the chance to shine.

One of the first things you'll notice is just how different *Powerdrome* looks compared to its futuristic stablemates. While the Blades you race in are fairly derivative and display none of the character seen in games such as *F-Zero GX*, the actual environments they race through are a totally different matter. *Powerdrome*'s visuals have a distinctive hazy style which reminds us of Sony's excellent *Ico*, and while the textures can look muddy the game comes alive thanks to the fantastic use of lighting. Indeed, as far as realistic-looking lighting goes, this is one of the most impressive examples we've seen recently and really helps *Powerdrome* stand out from the crowd. Hurtling through dark tunnels to suddenly find yourself bathed in glorious sunshine as you emerge the other side is a breathtaking experience that is only superseded by the ridiculously fast speeds your Blades can reach.

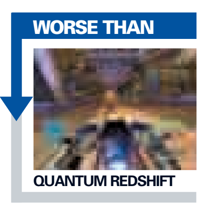
There's also satisfaction to be found in the sheer amount of contests you can take part in. As well as the expected championships you'll find yourself racing in eliminators, head-to-heads and trying to beat set times in a certain number of laps. You're initially limited to a small selection of tracks and contests, but more are unlocked as you progress through the game. Argonaut Sheffield has also seen fit to include extra characters and various pieces of concept art, and the open-ended way *Powerdrome* plays means you can tackle the

TUBE SLIDERS



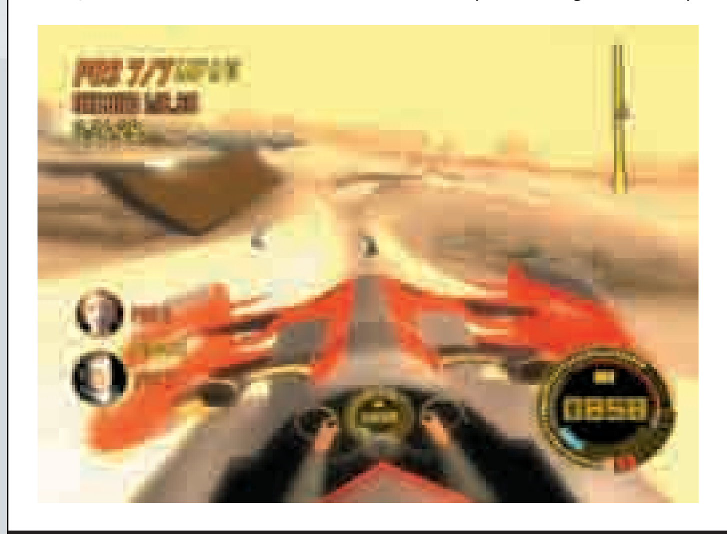
BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

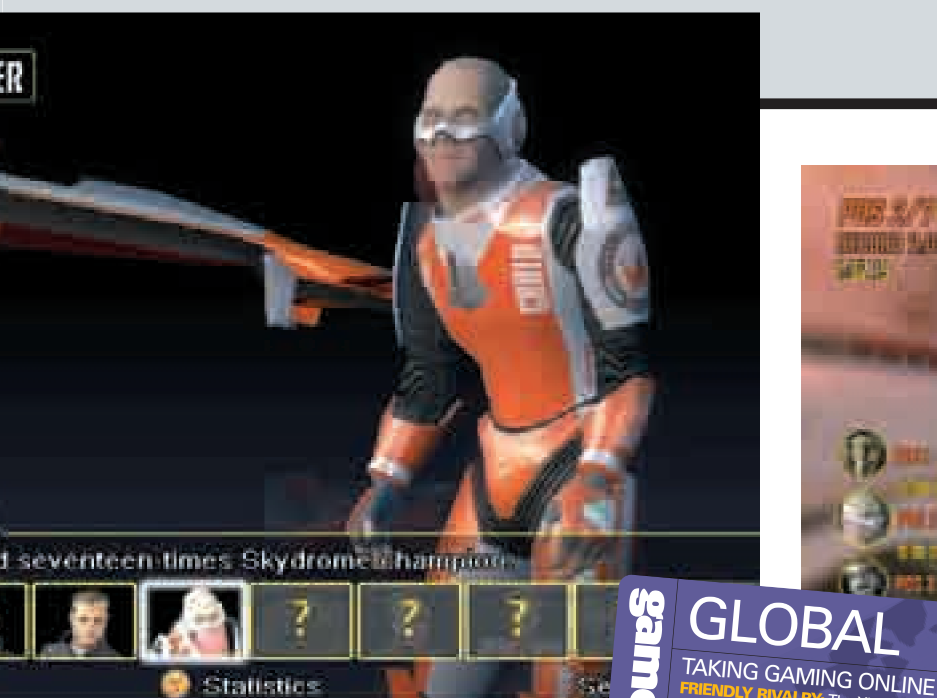


QUANTUM REDSHIFT

The lighting effects in *Powerdrome* are simply superb and really bring the game to life









games™ GLOBAL

TAKING GAMING ONLINE

FRIENDLY RIVALRY: The Xbox version of the game comes with a variety of online options, allowing you to enjoy high-speed races with up to seven other gamers across different tracks and race styles.

MUSIC MAESTRO

Taking notes from the likes of Konami and SEGA, Argonaut Sheffield has hired composer Chris Mann to create *Powerdrome*'s score. The BAFTA-nominated composer has already worked on *I-War: The Edge Of Chaos* and is currently working on a new feature film. *Powerdrome*'s music is a far cry from the techno beats of the *WipEout* series and instead uses dramatic orchestral scores and plenty of upbeat tempos to keep the game moving. Like its interesting visuals, *Powerdrome*'s music is totally different from what you'd expect from the genre. Each planet has its own unique sound and Mann has gone to great lengths to ensure that each track consistently ties in with the overall theme of each level.

various challenges whichever way you like.

Rewards for players who can race for extended periods of time without hitting the walls (not an easy task) come in the form of a blue meter that gradually fills up. Once full, you'll be able to use your Blade's blisteringly fast boost, or reserve it to repair your ship should you take too much damage. It's a nice little touch, but, sadly, it suffers because of a few niggling faults. All the Blades you race are extremely twitchy and can be a real pain to control, making even something as straightforward as racing down a straight length of track fraught with danger, and it takes real skill to negotiate the game's hideously tight corners without losing your precious speed boosts. Of course, when one of the main aspects of a game is to allow the player to experience exhilarating speeds it makes sense to incorporate this into the track design. Unfortunately, the majority of tracks consist of little more than long, unexciting straights with the odd sharp curve thrown in here and there. As a result you'll constantly find yourself switching between vomit-inducing high speeds or stuttering along at a sluggish crawl.

If this wasn't frustrating enough, it would appear that *Powerdrome*'s Blades have graduated from the same school of AI motoring as the *Gran Turismo* series. Rather than use the entire track, the opposing Blades simply follow each other in one compact group, so you'll either find yourself at the very front or the very back of the pack. It's annoying (especially since the problem could have been easily corrected) and makes for some very unexciting racing. Even the nifty speed boost function has been hampered by the fact that a simple knock from an opponent will relieve you of your hard-earned boost bar. There's nothing more frustrating than masterfully taking a tight corner, only to be clipped by another Blade that appears from nowhere and robs you of your deserved reward. Taking us back to the days of *MSR*, it's something that deserves to stay in the past.

While *Powerdrome* initially engages with its unique look, impressive sounds and the promise of deeply engrossing gameplay, it soon reveals itself to be little more than yet another adequate futuristic racer. Kudos to Powell and Argonaut for updating such a classic, but times have moved on and *Powerdrome* has been left on the starting line.



VERDICT 6/10

TRIES A LITTLE TOO HARD FOR ITS OWN GOOD

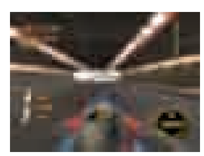
FAQs

Q. WHERE'S THE ORIGINAL?
Not here. The first game was published by Electronic Arts and that's where it's staying.

Q. HOW FAST IS IT?
Well, it's not up to the ridiculous speeds of *F-Zero GX*, but you'll still be reaching for the sick bucket at times.

Q. ANY WEAPONS?
Sadly not. *Powerdrome* relies on your basic driving skills rather than frenetic blasting, which would have been fine had the handling been more responsive.

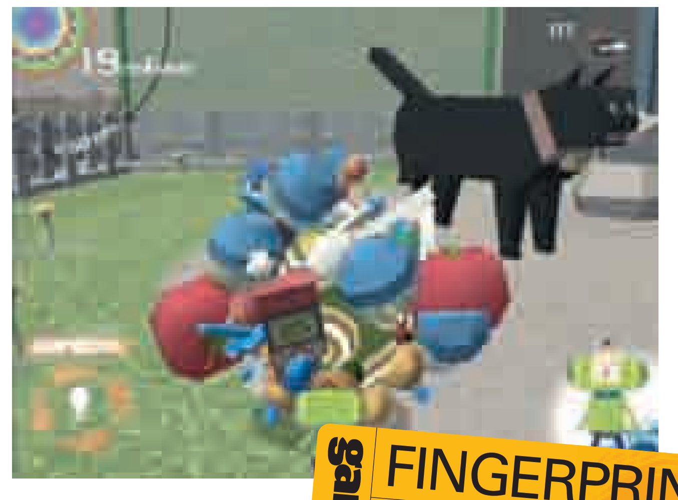
PS2 | **£39.99** | **MAY '04**



Powerdrome's soundtrack doesn't sound quite as nice on the PlayStation2 due to the lack of 5.1 sound, and the visuals also lack the Xbox's clarity and polish.

ROLL, ROLL, ROLL YOUR BALL…

KATAMARI DAMASHII



DETAILS





FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Namco

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
¥6,800

RELEASE
TBA (Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-2

So, here's the deal – your dad, the king of the universe, got drunk one night and blithely destroyed almost everything in existence, leaving it to you, his son, to literally pick up the pieces and restore life as we know it. Confused? Well, don't be – instead, come and experience the beautifully insane world of *Katamari Damashii*. From the eccentric introductory FMV (best described as *Eurotrash's* opening credits with added hallucinogens) to the game itself, *Katamari Damashii* is just plain twisted, but in a good way. To call it typical Japanese craziness would be trite, but the atmosphere of happy endearment is one of the game's resounding characteristics.

The actual game has you rolling around a ball that can pick up various everyday detritus. Of course, you can't just grab anything right away – instead, you begin by picking up smaller objects until the ball reaches a certain mass and size, after which it grows bigger and allows larger objects to be picked up. Most levels have your dad setting a target diameter for the ball and then giving you a time limit to complete this task – hit this goal and he places said ball of stuff up in the cosmos as a star.

Interestingly, it's the control system that stands out when you begin. The ball itself is controlled via the dual analog sticks in a fashion not all that dissimilar to a tank; both sticks forward to advance, back to reverse, and in opposing directions to turn. Couple this rather unlikely technique with an almost non-existent HUD and you have a game that, although conceptually unique, is also refreshingly accessible.

Despite the simple premise, there is quite a bit of variation in the missions; not only in terms of environmental differences, but also in the way that some missions require you to pick up certain objects to form specific constellations. There are also a fair amount of unlockable presents that the Prince can wear – such as a scarf, headphones or a crown – provided you can complete the relevant tasks to access them. True, this might be a touch bizarre for some people's tastes, but no matter how you look at it, *Katamari Damashii* is a truly lovely game. It's certainly been a while since a title has had us dumbfounded with pure, unbridled gaming joy and, to be honest, you can't get a much better endearment than that.

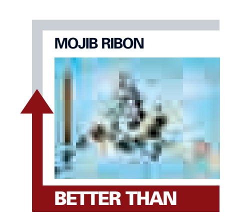
games™ FINGERPRINT

WHAT MAKES THIS GAME UNIQUE

ON THE BALL – How many games do you know that have you rolling around a ball that can pick up stuff? Not many, we reckon. So it's safe to say that *Katamari Damashii* is utterly unique. Simple, really.

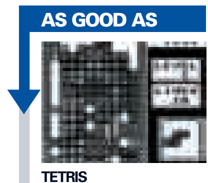
VERDICT 8/10
FUN, ACCESSIBLE AND, ABOVE ALL, UNIQUE

MOJIB RIBON

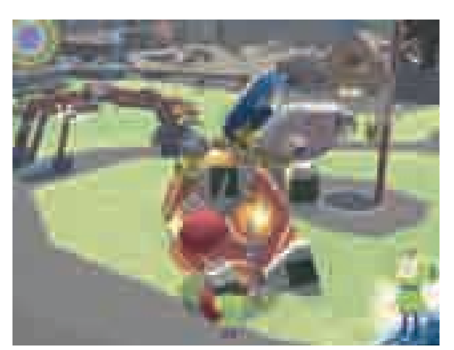


BETTER THAN

AS GOOD AS



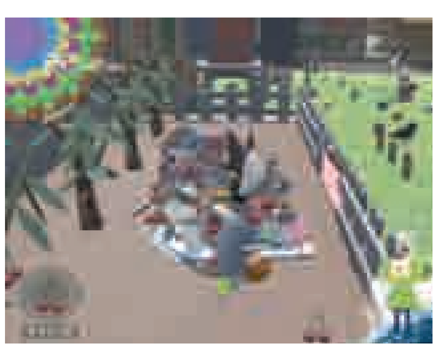
TETRIS



That's your dad, that is, and he wants you to pick up 102mm of stuff.



If it's not nailed down you can collect it, but only the small things first.

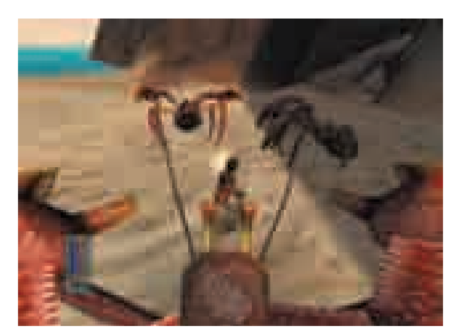


Think you're quirky because you wear odd socks? You lose to *Katamari*...


eMag



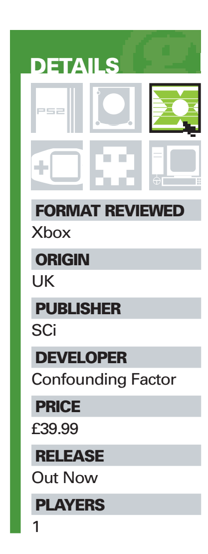
Being a jolly sailor type, Rhama's a dab hand at the old swimming lark.


Come on, someone must have a joke about crabs, surely?



RHAMA SETS OFF ON HIS TITANIC MAIDEN VOYAGE

GALLEON



FORMAT REVIEWED
Xbox

ORIGIN
UK

PUBLISHER
SCi

DEVELOPER
Confounding Factor

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
Out Now

PLAYERS
1

Time is a fickle mistress indeed. Had *Galleon* made its scheduled Dreamcast launch, you could well have been flicking through our Retro section only to find reference to 'Confounding Factor's crucial title' or 'Toby Gard's stunning return to form'. But without wanting to seem overly critical from the get-go, this is a game without obvious purpose or worth in 2004. Every element that could have been revolutionary or pioneered by the second-most delayed game ever (just behind *Duke Nukem Forever*, which we'd hazard will face many of the same problems as *Galleon* should it ever be completed) has been done better during its many tumbling predicted release dates. The result? A game that could have been huge, important and remembered for all the right reasons will now slip onto shelves unnoticed, feel horribly derivative and dated, and most likely be remembered for all the wrong reasons. What a difference a few years can make, eh?

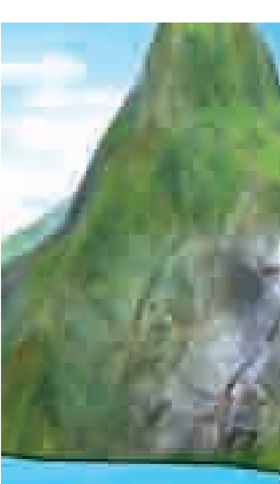
The issue of control is as jumbled and confused as just about every other element that makes up *Galleon*'s twisted package. Starting with an excellent tutorial in getting around, well thought-out features such as the inability to fall from ledges when walking slowly (thanks, Lara) are for nought when the basic controls are so fundamentally flawed that you may as well be controlling a Warthog from *Halo* on a high wire. This system of camera movement rather than traditional character-relative control was presumably implemented to address the age-old issue of poor 3D cameras. It fails. Horribly. As well as giving protagonist Captain Rhama a five-metre turning circle and making ledges and small areas tricky to navigate, there are plenty of times when your view is obscured and, even after extensive

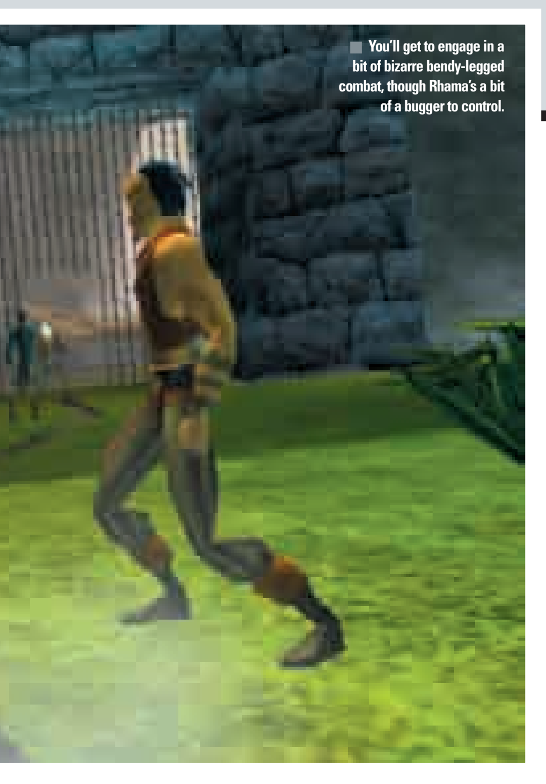


play, this theoretically wonderful control method never gets any easier to use. And don't even get us started on those ill-conceived 'jumping on top of poles' sections – frustration, thy name is *Galleon*.

Aside from a level of visual polish that gives away the game's Dreamcast heritage like chocolate around the mouth of a puppy-eyed fat kid, there are other areas of presentation that make the game feel clunky and unpolished. Rhama moves around with no real sense of weight, leaping some ten feet upwards or easily twice that distance along flat surfaces, and even some nice skidding motions and actions can't make amends for the atrocity that is climbing. Certain rocky faces can be scaled with the Right Trigger, yet despite the 3D compass that accompanies this move, disorientation and sheer shock at the appalling lack of connection or contact are all but inevitable. These control elements are by far the game's biggest downfall, meaning that *Galleon* would still be a chore to wade through even if it were the best game of the last ten years. Which it most certainly is not.

That's not to say there's nothing going for Mr Gard's least buxom offering to date, mind. Confounding Factor has implemented (for the most part) some of the best lip-synching we've ever seen in a videogame, and close-ups on the


Tomb Raider's pointy-headed Tyrannosaur has got nothing on this 17-polygon beastie.



You'll get to engage in a bit of bizarre bendy-legged combat, though Rhama's a bit of a bugger to control.



angular characters are often saved by this seemingly tiny feature. Combat methods are similarly impressive (even if the actual fighting leaves something to be desired), and as you continue to deal damage to foes your arsenal expands until you're subjecting unsuspecting crab monsters to the dreaded Finger Of Doom or unleashing devastating area attacks. Marvellous. Even the epic environments, while angular and textured to N64 standards, are a sight to behold, often allowing fair exploration within the scope of the massive islands.

So, five years in the making and countless publishers later we find that *Galleon* has been damaged in transit quite considerably, but its owners don't appear too concerned. Like *Malice* before it, various publishing houses have pushed and pulled the direction of the game and the resulting product dazzles with its incoherence and dated nature. The past 12 months have seen *Prince Of Persia* and *Ninja Gaiden* lead the charge of titles that offer everything that *Galleon* can muster and more, meaning that the only term you can really use to successfully describe this is 'too little, too late'. Make no mistake – there definitely is some degree of enjoyment to be gleaned from *Galleon*, but you'll need your entire crew working flat out to dig up the deeply buried treasure.

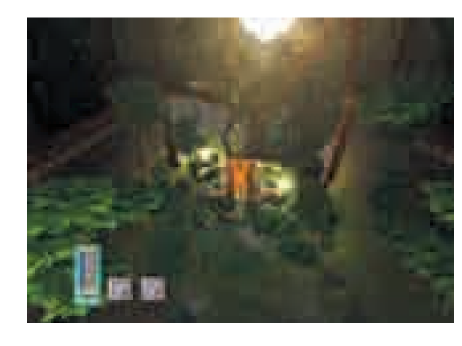


PIRATES: JUST SAY NO

Seeing as how every publisher *Galleon* has had has seemingly envisaged a very different game, it'll come as no surprise that the finished product misses the boat on several fronts. As well as being beaten to the punch in many of its key features, the decision by whichever publisher it may have been to tone down the piracy theme couldn't have come at a worse time. With Johnny Depp spearheading the rebirth of pirate chic, a swashbuckling adventure that circumvents the law could have been massively successful on the back of *Pirates Of The Caribbean* – instead, the nautical equivalent of Dudley Do-Right trundles along on his seafaring quest rounding up treasure and slaying villains in the name of all that is good. *Galleon*'s plot it sickly sweet and dripping with the most fragrant of cheese, so we're just going to cry into our flagon of warm grog for a while about the plank-walking, mainbrace-splicing adventure that could have been.



He may not be a real pirate but at least Rhama tries the local grog. Bless.





VERDICT 4/10

SOMEONE'S GOING TO GET KEELHAULED FOR THIS

FAQs

Q. WHAT'S WITH THE GRAPHICS?

Galleon's visuals are a bizarre clash of an attempt at style and an attempt to cover up how dated the game is. Two strikes, then.

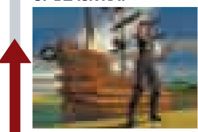
Q. HOW'S THE SPEECH?

The majority of the vocal talent and dialogue is of a surprisingly high standard. This is no *Forbidden Siren*.

Q. IT CAN'T BE ALL BAD, CAN IT?

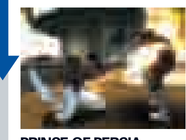
No – to its credit, *Galleon* does offer enough enjoyment to make a budget purchase more or less worthwhile.

PIRATES: THE LEGEND OF BLACK KAT



BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME



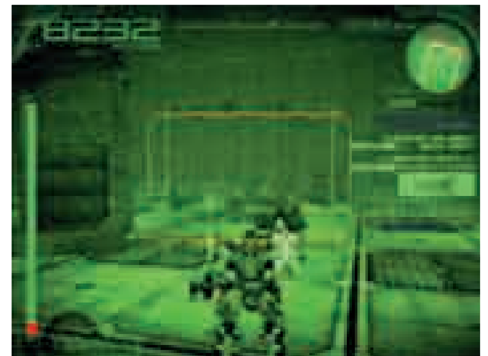
Some old favourites reappear on the Revolution disc. Happy memories indeed…





Despite the action being relatively close-quarters, the draw distance here is really rather special.

ARMORED



DETAILS

FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

ORIGIN
Japan

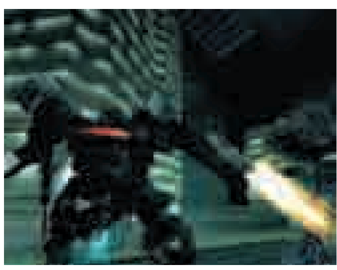
PUBLISHER
FROM Software

DEVELOPER
In-House

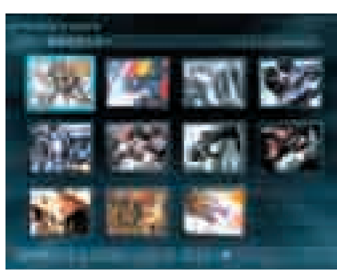
PRICE
¥6,800

RELEASE
TBA '04
(Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-4



The cut-scenes have been improved somewhat to help enhance the story-telling side of the game.



Fans will go crazy for the unlockable archives.



Virtually every inch of your mecha is customisable now, allowing you to be really creative with your ACs.

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

MOVIE MAGIC: The cut-scenes are very cool due to artistic camera judder and motion-blurring effects.

SAME AGAIN: The Revolution disc might be a fanboy's dream, but it should impress newbies too.

A*rmored Core Nexus* is the culmination of the *Armored Core* franchise – a series that has spanned over seven years, eight games and two consoles. It's undoubtedly a bastion for mecha gaming, but the series has generally received a lukewarm reception outside its native Japan. While there's no guarantee that *Nexus* will be the game to change all that, on paper it does at least have all the potential necessary for such an attitude adjustment.

Contained on two discs, entitled Evolution and Revolution, *Nexus* is a genuinely vast game – Evolution contains a new story, missions and arena opponents, while Revolution is a collection of remade and enhanced missions from the three

generator dry, leaving you immobile and an unwitting target in a mechanical firing range.

This places a double onus on the player – now you have to customise your AC to run cooler and acquire enough skill to avoid enemy fire while successfully landing shots of your own. Having to manage these mutually opposing forces means that the power gaming has evolved into more than just parts customisation, and has become a game of evolving skill acquisition. The constant micro-management of your AC's mutually opposed abilities coupled with an increased efficiency at neutralising enemies is a cerebral, immersive and vibrantly unique gaming experience, which lifts the game above its past incarnations.

CORE NEXUS

OCCASIONALLY, A MECHA GAME GETS IT VERY, VERY RIGHT…

original PSone games. The latter offers encounters with numerous faces familiar to long-standing *AC* fans (such as Phantasma and Stinger, although Nineball is a notable exception) and there's also an Archive section which exhibits all the opening FMV, music, posters and design illustrations from the entire series. Admittedly, Revolution is squarely aimed at existing fans – a point emphasised by the comprehensive Archive section – but the ability to see first-hand how the series has evolved is something that can't be dismissed. In any case, Revolution is only half of what *Nexus* has to offer.

The focus of *Armored Core* remains the same – it's a third-person mecha action game that sees you pilot a walking robot (an Armored Core, or AC) taking whatever mission you deem fit. What's more, *Armored Core* remains a power gaming experience; you'll take your AC across missions, earn money, buy more parts and generally soup up your mechanical avatar. But whereas the power gaming aspect used to be an artificial consideration, not necessarily linked to the progression of the player's skill, *Nexus* changes that with a plethora of shrewd modifications. For instance, your AC runs hot and it's easy to overheat as your boosters generate Plasma, which in turn heats you up; get too hot and your armour melts. Moreover, your AC's radiator is no longer a passive part and if you noticeably overheat it will remove a chunk of power from your generator. Unfortunately, this means you could be in a situation where you're being deluged by plasma weapon fire while the radiator sucks your

The only problem with this is the learning curve, which has gone from 'relatively demanding' to 'incredibly intricate'. On the plus side, this is dealt with to some extent by the long overdue addition of an optional dual-analogue control set-up – while upgrading your mecha is a little unforgiving, at least the controls are on your side. Admittedly, the beginning of the game does ease you in beautifully, but it's the later missions that will test the skill and mental agility of any player. This isn't to say that *Nexus*' customisation aspect isn't inspired genius, because it clearly is. With a garage of 426 parts (many of which are from the previous games) and the added ability to tune the functions of various parts, *Nexus*' customisation is even more involving than any of the previous instalments. It's also worth mentioning the huge ramifications all this tweaking has on the wonderfully satisfying Versus mode; the lack of redundancy in the parts list is staggering, which makes fighting against friends in their own custom mechas that much more juicy.

Coupling all this with an enhanced graphical engine and music that'll have *AC* purists doing backflips with joy, *Nexus* can only really be defined as the pinnacle of its kind – a huge and involving game that makes it hard to see where FROM Software can take the series from here. While it's doubtful that we'll see it follow Irem's footsteps and draw a veil over the series, we're at least waiting with bated breath to see what it can come up with next.

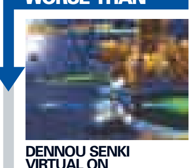
ARMORED CORE 3





BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN



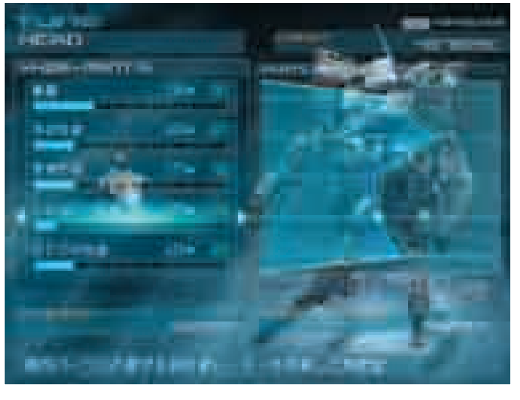
DENNOU SENKI VIRTUAL ON

FAQs

Q. ONLINE PLAY?
Officially, no. However, *Nexus* uses network link-up for Versus via the Broadband Adapter. This means it's theoretically possible to 'tunnel' a connection via a PC.

Q. ISN'T IT COMPLICATED?
Not really – the game uses a customisable dual-analogue control set-up, which makes things easier, although there is that learning curve…

Q. SO WHAT NOW?
We're not sure. By using every quality moment of the franchise on the Revolution disc, FROM Software seems to have played all its cards. But we doubt that'll stop it trying again…



NAME THAT TUNE

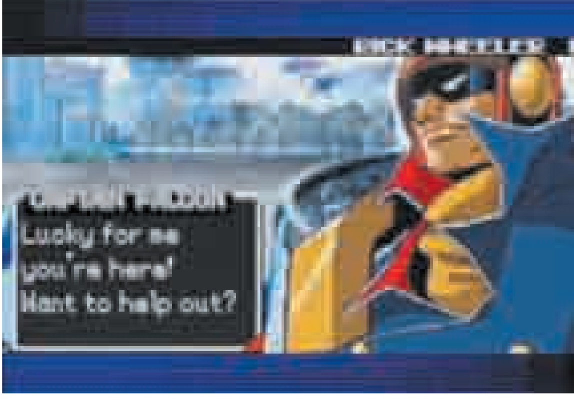
Certain parts of your AC can now be tuned for improved performance, which is made more important by the increased intricacy of managing your AC's heat output. Boosters too hot? Tune their heat output down and, while you're at it, cool your legs and arms. These modifications don't hinder the other facets of each part but beware – overcompensating on cooling, for example, could leave a defence statistic bare, so it's wise to tune parts across the board while also catering for your particular playing style. This ability isn't unique, but the sheer number of parts in the garage (a whopping 426) eclipses any competition.



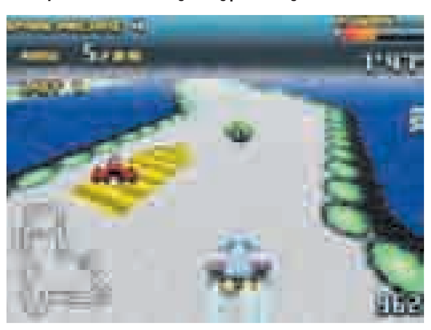
VERDICT 8/10
ONE OF THE FINEST MECHA GAMES EVER MADE

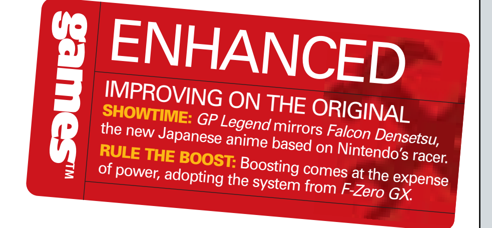


Jumps aren't just a way of progressing, they can also lead to inventive short cuts.



GP Legend includes new characters but old favourites crop up during Story mode, which is an engrossing part of the game.





DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£29.99

RELEASE
June '04
(Japan: Out now)

PLAYERS
1-2

F-ZERO: GP LEGEND

THE LEGEND OF F-ZERO CONTINUES TO GROW

If there's one thing you can expect from *F-Zero*, it's speed. The watertight handling and numerous on-screen competitors have always been impressive, but it's the raw velocity that truly astonishes. So it's no surprise to find *GP Legend* conducts its business on the GBA at an eye-blistering pace with no slowdown or compromise.

What isn't as predictable is how the handling fares on the small screen. Fortunately, *GP Legend* is equally at ease accommodating boosting and side-swipes alongside the smooth handling – something that's appreciated when the trickier courses introduce a plethora of sharp turns, jumps and hairpin bends. Make no mistake, even though *GP Legend* can be a tough nut to crack, the consistency of the track design and handling means this high difficulty level invites rather than discourages another go.

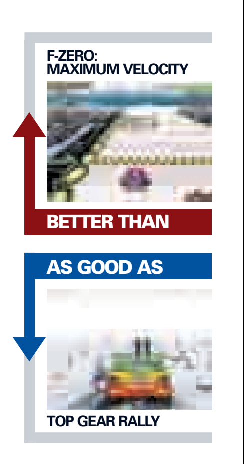
It helps that the flexibility of Story mode negates potential aggravation. You'll need to complete a series of challenges if you're to progress – finish ahead of certain racers, complete courses within a strict time limit and so on. While doing so, all the characters you meet are added to the select screen, allowing you to switch to them and follow their path through the game should you come up against a tricky challenge. Presented in delightful anime style, the stories intertwine and shift between past and present – this allows skills to be honed elsewhere before returning to the original bugbear, and the fact that more of the story is revealed this way is a genuine boon.

Unravelling the story is entertaining, and Grand Prix mode (straightforward cup challenges) is enjoyable, but it's the third option – unlockable Zero Test mode – which completes the package. Consisting of a series of challenges that centre on different aspects of racing, rewards are handed out according to the time they're completed in, with challenges getting increasingly harder – bronze trophies are easy to acquire but those seeking every gold trophy will damn their completist nature as the enormity of the challenge sets in. Still, these die-hards will have fun extracting every last drop from *GP Legend* thanks to its satisfying mix of speed and handling.



VERDICT 7/10

NOT LEGENDARY BUT STILL THE GBA'S FASTEST RACER




eMag





For all its improved graphics, this game can't hide the fact that gingers shouldn't wear a strip with red on it…

games™ ENHANCED

IMPROVING ON THE ORIGINAL

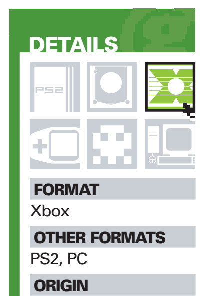
OLD SKOOL: No gimmicks, just old-fashioned arcade football, the way *FIFA* was meant to be.

PRETTY BOY: Your footballers look like real people now, not deformed apes in licensed shirts.

UEFA EURO 2004

DO WE NEED A REFERENDUM TO REVIEW THIS?

DETAILS



FORMAT
Xbox

OTHER FORMATS
PS2, PC

ORIGIN
Canada

PUBLISHER
EA Sports

DEVELOPER
In-House

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
22 May

PLAYERS
1-2

FIFA 2004



AS GOOD AS

WORSE THAN



PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 3

The *FIFA* franchise has gone through the mill over the past couple of years. In fact, it would be safe to say that the game owned by everyone with a PlayStation hasn't made the transition to the next-gen consoles too well. Here's where we have to hold our hands up and take some of the blame. For years, games journos berated *FIFA* and complained it never changed or evolved. And then when EA caved in and revamped its proud beast we hated it because it wasn't the fast-flowing, free-playing *FIFA* we all enjoyed.

So all hail the latest evolution in the *FIFA* franchise, or rather devolution. Thankfully, EA has ousted the 'off the ball' gameplay and such gimmickry of recent years in favour of a more traditional arcade approach – controls have reverted to the simple run, pass and shoot of old. The 'new' simplicity makes for a fun and fast game that, courtesy of the excellent passing system and decent AI, finds a firm balance between real football and the arcade fun of a five-minute kick about. Only *Pro Evo* can do this better, and in this respect EA has half-hinched a few ideas, mostly the introduction of morale and fitness meters – now you may want to play a lesser player, such as Nicky Butt instead of Gerrard, if he's more 'up' for the match.

Visually the game is a real treat too. EA seems to have finally stopped making all its players in the form of ape-men and has realised that, Wayne Rooney aside, real footballers have necks. The kits, stadia and teams are all real and new, and the whole game is caked in dull browns and oranges, resembling a Mediterranean sunset, so anyone seeking artistry over gameplay will be pleased.



As with the other *FIFA* games, this is fully licensed, so no more playing as David Peckham.

It's all good, then? Well, yes, although the same niggles that plagued *FIFA 2004* are present, such as the game's weak shooting, constant sweet-spots and unplayable corner system remain. And for Xbox owners, *FIFA* still doesn't support Xbox Live, which is a massive problem. So it's better than the recent next-gen *FIFA*s, but still lacks the total football of *Pro Evo*, or indeed the Live play of Codemasters' *England International Football*. This is an enjoyable package but there's still a lot of work to be done here.



VERDICT 5/10
MOSTLY BACK TO WINNING WAYS OF OLD

PS2 £39.99 22 MAY



No Live play for Xbox owners, but PS2 players do get to go online, which boosts this game's appeal no end.


eMag



The mini-games are strange but fun – this one sees you battling to suck up food. Just watch out for the bombs…

NINTENDO IN 'PULLS ITS GBA SOCKS UP' SHOCKER

HOSHI NO KIRBY: KAGAMI NO DAIMEIKYUU

DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
Game Boy Advance

ORIGIN
Japan

PUBLISHER
Nintendo

DEVELOPER
HAL Laboratory

PRICE
¥4,800

RELEASE
TBA '04 (Japan: Out Now)

PLAYERS
1-4

Managing your abilities is now more important, as some areas can only be accessed if you use certain ones.

Of all Nintendo's mascots, it's Kirby that we've lost the most faith in recently. With only a NES-to-GBA remake and an overly-simplistic racer to his credit, he's been dealt a bad hand. Can his latest adventure make Kirby the object of our affections once more? Not exactly, but what it does offer restores our belief that Nintendo isn't one to chuck one of its own out into the cold.

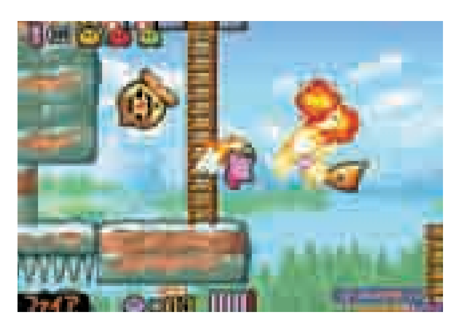
On the face of it, *Kagami no Daimeikyuu* (roughly translated as 'Great Labyrinth Of The Mirror') doesn't seem very different from *Nightmare In Dream Land*, and little has changed as far the core gameplay goes. Kirby still runs, jumps and floats through a variety of stages, sucking up anyone along the way and absorbing their abilities. What's more, he's still the only one able to avert Dream Land's current crisis, which this week is the destruction of the Great Mirror and the scattering of its pieces across the land; so far, so like every other Kirby game. This isn't really a criticism, as the mix of platform and puzzle action is something we've never had a problem with (even if it can feel aimed at a younger audience).

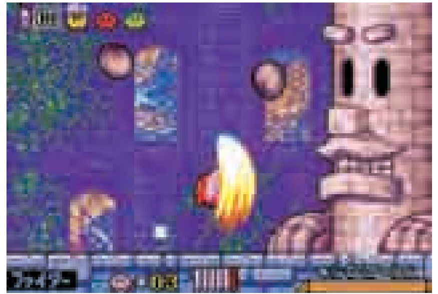
However, the biggest problem that every Kirby adventure has faced is longevity (you usually need only a couple of hours to reach the end) and it's here that *Kagami no Daimeikyuu* plays its trump card. It's no *Super Mario World*, but compared to its predecessors this game is huge; each world sprawls across a massive map with multiple routes, many of which require a bit of thought before you can reach them. You can finish the game without finding every hidden map and seeing every area, but that just provides more incentive to go back and see what you missed. This expansive premise means the ability to link up and co-operate with others makes more sense – you can split up to explore different routes before bringing your friends across using Kirby's mobile phone (yes, really) should you find something valuable. It's a tweak that probably seems obvious, but, finally, Kirby has a game he can be proud of… Or as proud as a pink balloon can get, anyway.





SURPRISINGLY DEEP FOR SUCH A SIMPLE GAME







AN EXPERIENCE BEYOND LIMITS – PAIN AND PLEASURE, INDIVISIBLE

THE SUFFERING





DETAILS



FORMAT REVIEWED
PlayStation2

OTHER FORMATS
Xbox

ORIGIN
US

PUBLISHER
Midway

DEVELOPER
Surreal Software

PRICE
£39.99

RELEASE
14 May

PLAYERS
1

DEAD TO RIGHTS

BETTER THAN

WORSE THAN

HITMAN: CONTRACTS

If you made a 13-year-old watch *Hellraiser* and play *Silent Hill*, and then sent them away to design a videogame, it's entirely likely they would return with the design brief for *The Suffering*. We don't recommend this experiment, but it serves to highlight just how Surreal Software has targeted its latest effort. Log onto the official *Suffering* website and you'll hear voiceover man say "*The Sufferrrinngg*... rated mature" as though it were the be all and end all of gaming. We'll wait to see how this sells to discover if that is indeed the case. But that's the immediate problem with this game – its tone, colour palette and design elements are all so try-hard, it's as though Stan Winston sat down with a collection of Tortured Souls figurines and stuck hypodermics in them in order to create the game's many monsters. There's very little in here that isn't a terrible shame.

Taking the role of an ambiguously convicted felon named Torque (affectionately known as 'Baby Raper' by the other inmates, and doing time for, y'know, killing the wife and kids) it's your job to escape from a prison which has become a portal to hell – that is, if you aren't just losing your mind and going on a massive slaughter spree. Gaming-wise, you can flit between first- and third-person modes at will (and how many games have been crying out for that recently?), but this actually alters gameplay very little, as most of the non-murderous challenges are of the 'go here and press a button' variety. As luck would have it, you can also metamorphose into a primordial beast for a carnage-heavy special attack in order to cut through the legions of deformed bodies that stand in your way.



Gosh, would you look at just how outrageously disturbing and controversial this guy is. Yawn…

If you think it sounds a bit dark, that's because the game is achingly desperate for you to think it is. In truth, *The Suffering* is the epitome of the oversized, Eighties-inspired licence – like a bad dream where you get a paper cut and seven pints of blood pour out. Even the 'shiv' you start with is the size of a machete. It's not that this is a bad game, but to ignore the important elements of gameplay in order to add more gratuitous elements to the cauldron is unforgivable, and in that sense *The Suffering* is most similar to *Soldier Of Fortune II* and the like. Put bluntly, we're not half as offended by *The Suffering*'s content as we are by its execution.

XB £39.99 OUT NOW



Much of the same not-at-all-scary horror, but with a few of the graphical tweaks you'd expect and improved loading times. If you really want to own *The Suffering*, there's little to choose between formats.

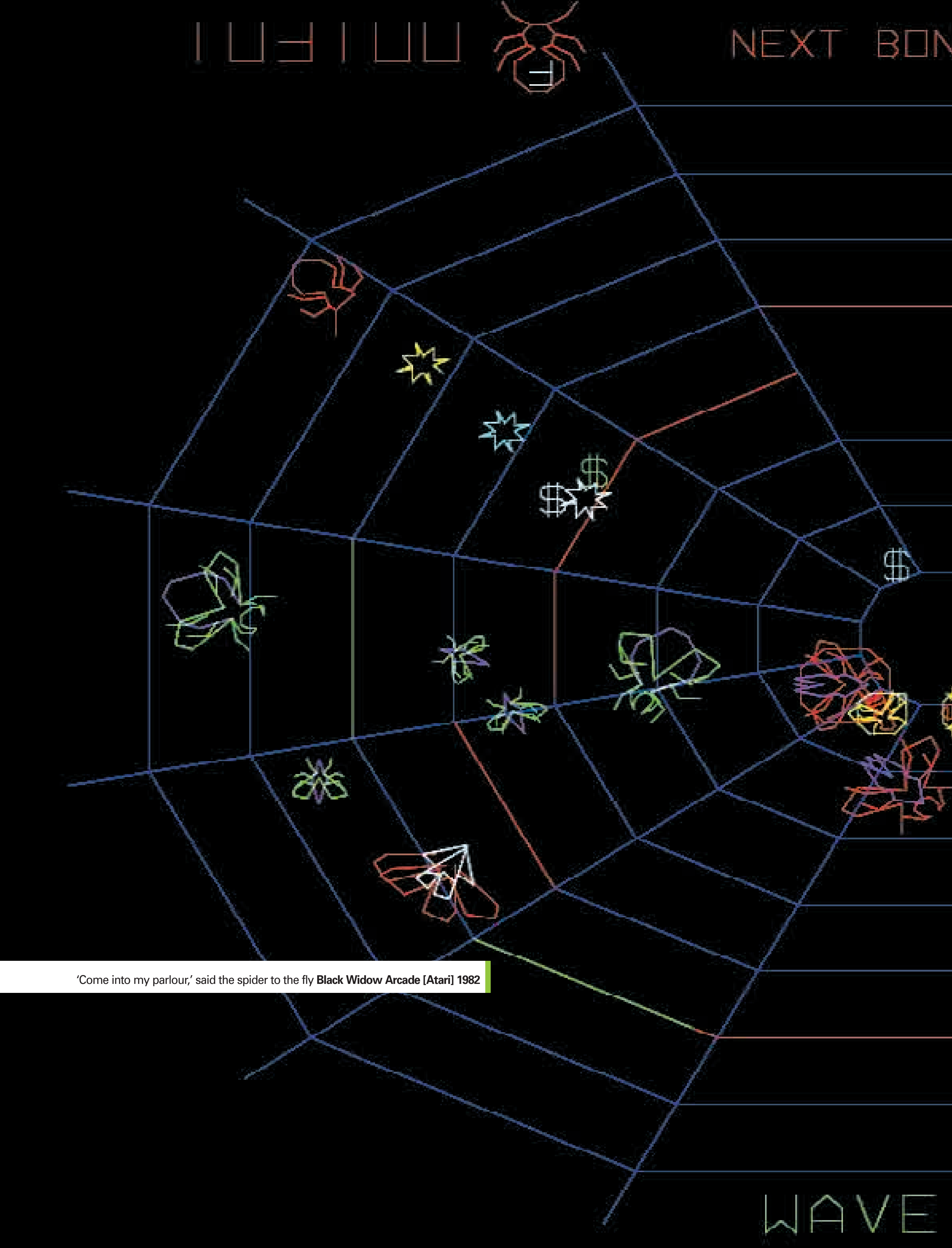


VERDICT 4/10
BELOW-AVERAGE GAME, ABOVE-AVERAGE BLOODLUST

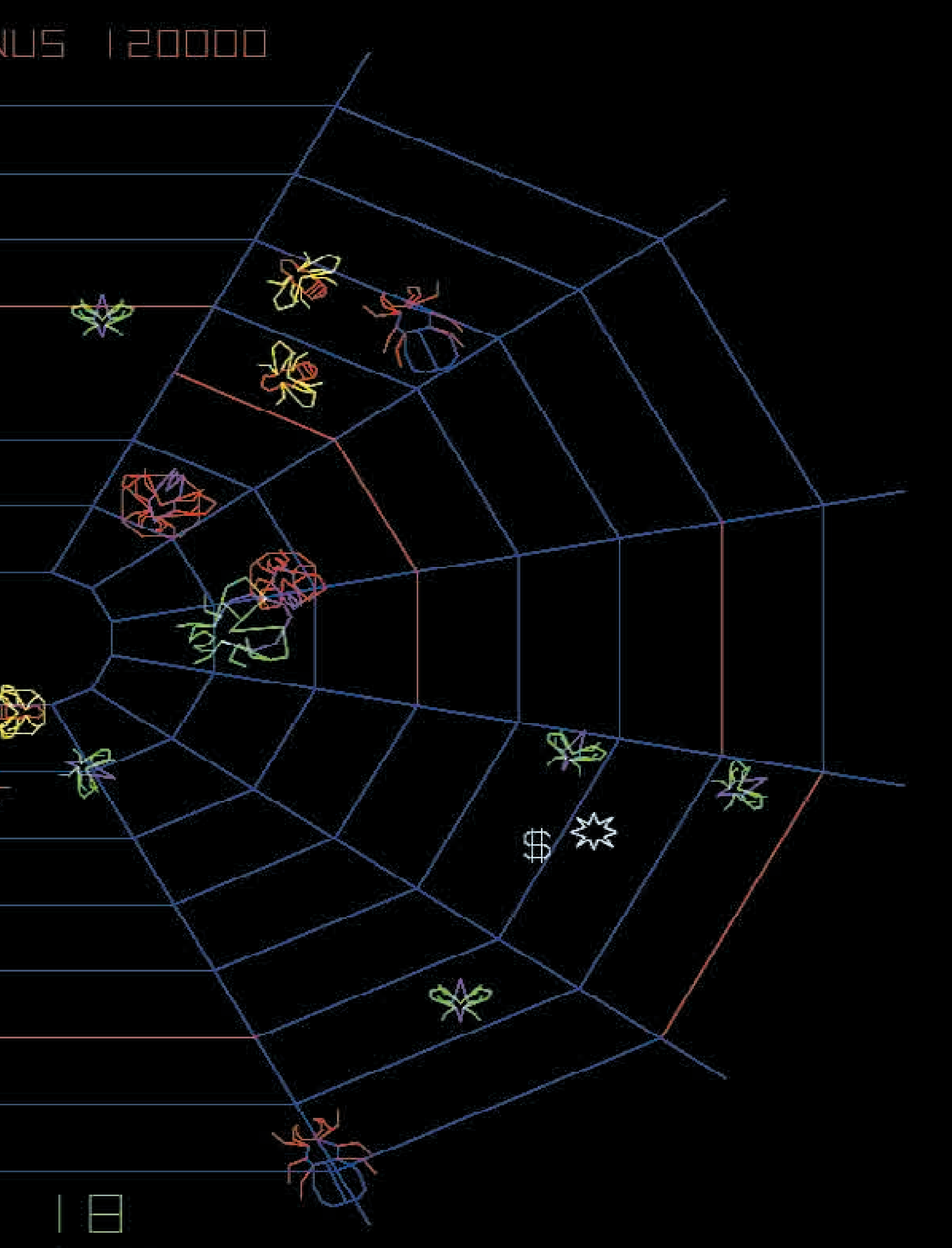
Subtlety is not *The Suffering*'s forte. Painfully self-conscious bloodletting quite clearly is…







'Come into my parlour,' said the spider to the fly **Black Widow Arcade [Atari] 1982**


NUS 120000
18


eMag


A PARAGON PUBLICATION
NO.19 JUNE 2004
RETRO
00p
MICRO GAMES ACTION
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Watch out Commodore!
Classic Machine: Atari 520 ST
Relive the classic 16-bit battle
I, ROBOT
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SIX OF THE BEST
CLASSIC MACHINE
RETROSPECTIVE
AND MORE...

RETRO NEWS

Find out what's going on in the here and now of retro gaming…

Not too long ago, Hudson released four titles on the GameCube to commemorate the Famicom's twentieth birthday. Intensive play revealed them to hold more in common with games of yesteryear than any other recent remakes (such as *Shinobi* and *Contra: Shattered Soldier*) so as a result you'll be seeing GameCube games in the retro section for the first (and most likely the last) time.

Still, it's a perfect example of how popular retro gaming is becoming and it's an interest that seems to show no sign of diminishing. This year's selection of retro remakes have already received varying degrees of praise and the onslaught is set to continue into 2005 and beyond. The likes of *Prince Of Persia 2*, *Neo Contra* and *The Last Ninja* are all on the cards and will continue to take the franchises in new directions – although, admittedly, these changes may not always be a good thing.

One change you'll hopefully notice is within this section, as we try to offer a more balanced selection of console and computer titles. Just because we're writing about old games, doesn't mean we fear change…

Darran Jones, Retro Editor

Midway Goes Retro Krazy

More arcade treasures from the lovely people at Midway

After the success of *Midway Arcade Treasures* on the PS2, Xbox and GameCube, Midway will be releasing volume two later this year. *Midway Arcade Treasures 2* will feature hits such as *Mortal Kombat, Mortal Kombat II, Mortal Kombat III, Primal Rage, Arch Rivals, NARC, Pit Fighter, Gauntlet 2, Rampage World Tours, Xenophobe* and *SpyHunter 2*, although after the first disc, this is a rather disappointing line-up. While there are a few classics on board this time, this is nowhere near the quality of the first collection.

Nevertheless, Midway will be including the same selection of in-depth interviews and trivia that was included with *Arcade Treasures* and, hopefully, it may even decide to reveal more games nearer to the release date. Still, it proves that there's a definite interest in retro titles on modern consoles so with any luck the likes of SEGA, Konami and Capcom will get on board and release their own collections.



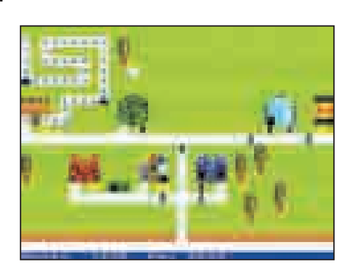
▲ Now you can rip out your best friend's spine from the comfort of your fancy next-gen console. Which is nice.

All The Fun Of The Spectrum

Good Lord – it's Theme Park on the Spectrum!

You might not think it, but there are still plenty of games getting released for humble 8-bit computers like the Spectrum and the Commodore64. Head over to www.cronosoft.co.uk and you'll find brand new titles like Jonathan Cauldwell's *Fun Park* being released for a paltry £1.99.

For those who can't guess, *Fun Park* is loosely based on Bullfrog's popular *Theme Park* and is itself an adaptation of Cauldwell's *Amusement Park 4000*, which won second prize in a recent mini-game competition. Coders had to create a game that was between 1 and 4Kb of memory and *Fun Park* is an enhanced version for Spectrum owners everywhere. So if you've still got access to your humble Speccy, blow off the dust, check the tape deck is still working and give *Fun Park* a try – you'll be glad you did.



▲ You can be a pixelated master of all you survey when you pick up a copy of *Fun Park*.

More NES Madness

With Nintendo's Famicom SP and its range of games being a huge hit in Japan, Nintendo has revealed the next wave of software for GBA owners. From 21 May, you'll be able to import 20 titles including *Mario Brothers, Clu Clu Land, Wrecking Crew, Dr. Mario, Dig Dug* and *Adventure Island* for ¥2,000 (around £10). While it's nice to see these classics re-released, surely Nintendo could fit all 20 games on one cartridge with space to spare…

This Month In 1991

Accompanied by the sexalicious sounds of Color Me Badd, Nintendo spectacularly shot itself in the foot this month 13 years ago…

In the news today

Tension rises in the Balkan states

On 27 June 1991, the Yugoslav army stormed into Slovenia, which had declared itself a republic just 48 hours earlier. The Slovenian capital, Ljubijana, immediately came under fire and its government retaliated by seizing and destroying 15 Yugoslav tanks, and shooting down at least six helicopters.

Neighbouring Croatia, which was also seeking independence from Yugoslavia, was invaded by federal forces too.

These incidents marked the beginning of a bloody and bitter war in the region as the federation of six Yugoslavian republics – Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia – fell apart. Racial tension ran high, and British troops were among the international peacekeeping force later sent in.

UK Charts in June 1991

1. **I Wanna Sex You Up**
   Color Me Badd
2. **The Shoop Shoop Song (It's In His Kiss)**
   Cher
3. **Baby Baby**
   Amy Grant
4. **Promise Me**
   Beverley Craven
5. **Shiny Happy People**
   R.E.M.
6. **Gypsy Woman (La Da Dee)**
   Crystal Waters
7. **Thinking About Your Love**
   Kenny Thomas
8. **Shocked**
   Kylie Minogue
9. **Any Dream Will Do**
   Jason Donovan
10. **Do You Want Me?**
    Salt 'N' Pepa

Atari ST games you were playing in 1991

1. **STUN Runner**
   (Domark)
2. **Cruise For A Corpse**
   (US Gold)
3. **F-15 Strike Eagle**
   (Microprose)
4. **Magic Pockets**
   (Renegade)
5. **Chuck Rock**
   (Eidos)
6. **Elf**
   (Ocean)
7. **Final Fight**
   (US Gold)
8. **Cool Croc Twins**
   (Empire)
9. **Shadow Dancer**
   (US Gold)
10. **Mega-Lo-Mania**
    (Image Works)

GAMING NEWS JUNE '91

Nintendo gives Sony the cold shoulder

Almost 13 years ago to the day, Nintendo set in motion the train of events that may explain its precarious position today. Since 1988, the company had been planning to develop a CD-ROM add-on for the SNES. A deal had been signed with Sony to create the 'Super Disc' which would play CD-ROMs and SNES cartridges. However, Sony would be the sole licensor of the machine, meaning Nintendo would have no control over the material on the console…

At the CES in June 1991, Sony unveiled the renamed Play Station and its partnership with Nintendo. However, still unhappy with the licensing agreement, Nintendo announced that it was no longer working with Sony, and would instead collaborate with Philips. Nintendo claimed this was because Philips' technology was superior. Sony was humiliated… and furious.

Lawsuits followed, but Nintendo prevailed. However, Sony continued to work on the Play Station, unveiling the PlayStationX – without the SNES cartridge port – in 1993. As soon as Sony decided to 'go it alone', Nintendo's grip on the industry began to slip. How different things might have been if they hadn't fallen out…



▲ This is what we missed out on because Nintendo and Sony parted ways. How selfish can you get, eh?

Why Don't They Remake…

WE RECKON JUVENILE DELINQUENCY NEVER GOES OUT OF FASHION…

JACK THE NIPPER

Release: **1986**
Format: **Various Home Systems**
Publisher: **Gremlin Graphics**
Developer: **In-House**

One of the greatest things we enjoy about playing games is that they allow you to do what you could never normally attempt in real life. Take *Jack The Nipper*, for example. Back in 1986 Gremlin Graphics gave you the chance to be bad – very, very bad indeed. The twist, however, was that rather than being in charge of a musclebound soldier complete with a devastating arsenal of weaponry, you were instead placed in the cute romper suit of the eponymous Jack the Nipper.

He might have looked like butter wouldn't have melted in his mouth, but Gremlin Graphics' Jack was one of gaming's most devious creations and proved to be a right handful. Set in a town that looked like it had jumped straight from the pages of the *Beano*, the aim of the game was simple – be as naughty as possible.



Starting off in the little tyke's room, your first task was to collect your trusty Pea-shooter and assign it to one of your two pockets; then it was time to cause some good old-fashioned mischief.

China plates, credit cards, weed killer and glue were just a selection of items that could be picked up, and while they could simply be destroyed by dropping them, creative use boosted your Naughtyometer no end. Make your way over to Gummo's Chomping Molars with the glue and you'd find an assembly line of teeth just waiting to be glued shut. If that wasn't enough, you could frighten cats with horns, cause washing machines to overflow, or even allow prisoners to escape with a well-placed bomb. The pursuit to fill your Naughtyometer was never-ending and the structure of *Jack The Nipper* made it a joy to play.

Of course, all this naughtiness didn't go unpunished and there were plenty of angry shopkeepers, parents and general members of the public around to make sure that your nefarious deeds did not go unpunished. Should you get caught by an angry grown-up (or even a dog or ghost for that matter) Jack's nappy rash would rapidly increase.



▲ Bizarrely, there were ghosts out to get Jack, although a dose of Ritalin would probably do for him too.

▲ The pesky little shi… er, spirited young man was free to roam the streets and terrorise local residents. National service, that's what he needs.

Once a sound thrashing had been administered five times, it was game over for the little sod.

The potential for an updated *Jack The Nipper* is endless and this is just the sort of game we'd love to see in three dimensions. Imagine how much trouble we could cause if Jack was let loose in fully destructible environments that were just begging to be taken to pieces. A first-person view would also allow the precocious youngster to fire his Pea-shooter with even greater accuracy than before. And why stop there? He could use a catapult, throw stink bombs… the potential is endless. If it never happens, though, we're more than happy to carry on playing the original.

Coconut Capers

After his shenanigans in the first game, Jack finds himself deported to Australia. Not at all keen on this new life, Jack bails out en route (using his nappy as a parachute) and finds himself in a jungle, closely followed by his spank-happy dad. Featuring great cartoon visuals and slightly less confusing puzzles, *Jack The Nipper II: Coconut Capers* was a worthy follow-up and is well worth checking out.

GAMES THAT TIME FORGOT…

CADILLACS AND DINOSAURS

You'd have thought that any game allowing you to beat up a Tyrannosaurus Rex would stay in the mind forever, but Capcom's *Cadillacs And Dinosaurs* is yet another forgotten classic.

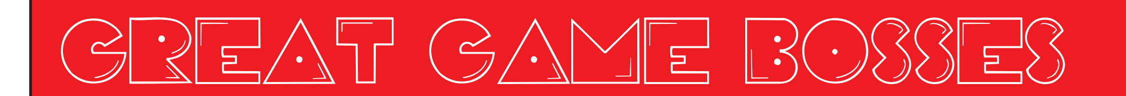
Based on the graphic novels by Mark Schultz and using Capcom's CPS Q Sound hardware, *Cadillacs And Dinosaurs* was another classic scrolling beat-'em-up from Capcom that helped cement the developer's reputation as a master of the genre. Released in 1992, *Cadillacs* allowed up to three players to battle against the evil Black Marketeers (a ruthless gang of dinosaur poachers) and save a variety of imprisoned dinosaurs.

The four available characters each came with a range of strengths and weaknesses and had a considerable amount of moves available to them (not bad considering the game only used two fire buttons). While players would start the game with just their bare hands for protection, numerous weapons ranging from pistols to rocket launchers were readily available and helped improve the raucous action no end. While your task was to rescue the many captured dinosaurs, the Black Marketeers could turn the reptiles on you by mistreating them. Needless to say, a few well-placed combos were more than enough to turn the dinos from their temper tantrums and send them quietly on their way.

Featuring superb, cartoony visuals – complete with over-the-top 'Boom' and 'Smack' effects – and some great sound, *Cadillacs And Dinosaurs* was an intense and conceptually unique fighter that thoroughly deserved every coin you were able to shove into it.



Release: 1992
Format: Arcade
Publisher: Capcom
Developer: In-House





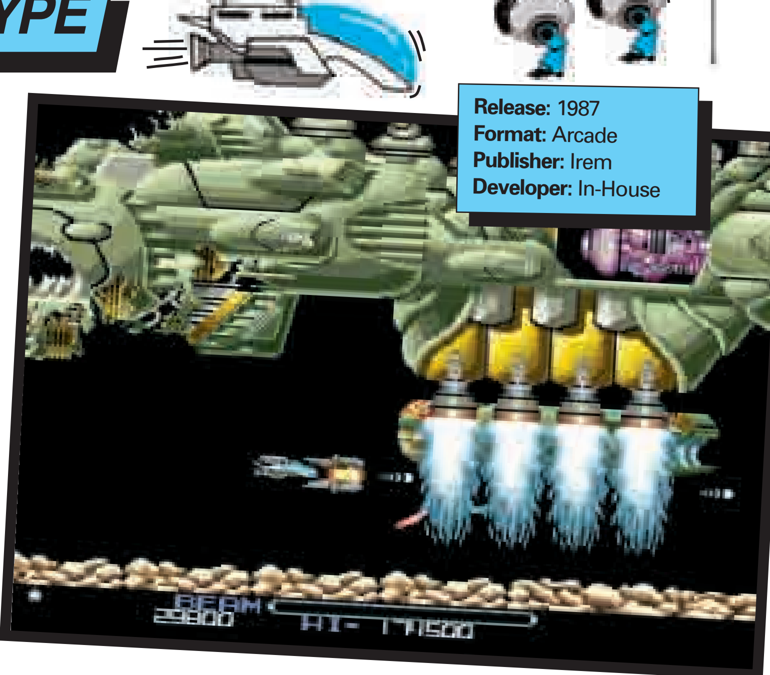
THE MOTHERSHIP IN R-TYPE

When *R-Type* was released in 1987, few realised the impact it would have on later generations of side-scrolling shooters. As much as we were wowed by the fantastically organic visuals and the game's unique power-up beam it was the wonderfully inventive bosses that caught our attention.

Special mention has to go to the awesome Mothership that resided on *R-Type*'s third level, although, in retrospect, it *was* the third level. After dispensing with a horrific-looking alien and a huge pulsating heart (that came complete with its own bullet-spewing snake), you finally entered one of the most memorable showdowns of all time.

Initially, everything around you was quiet and tension immediately started to build as you moved into the level. Then, without warning, a huge laser streaked towards you and the onslaught began in earnest. Not only was *R-Type*'s Mothership absolutely brimming with all manner of dangerous weapons, it also used its body to try to crush your ship against various parts of the landscape. Skilful manoeuvring, some clever manipulation of your ship's Force Orb and a hell of a lot of button hammering were needed and it took many players several attempts before the behemoth was laid to rest.

Nowadays, it seems every shoot-'em-up has at least one mothership to deal with, but in our minds nothing can compare to the original and best. Truly a great game boss.



Release: 1987
Format: Arcade
Publisher: Irem
Developer: In-House

Star games

The games that made it big on TV and at the movies

SPACED

THE DEAD HAVE THEIR DAY… WELL, AN EPISODE OF SPACED, ANYWAY

Everyone loves zombies – they're the world's favourite form of the undead (vampires? No thanks) and can turn even the most mundane videogame into a brain-munching delight. Even better, they seem to be making a resurgence at the moment – what with the remake of *Dawn Of The Dead* and games like *Resident Evil: Outbreak* – so it seems only fit that we bring to your attention a starring role for one of Capcom's earlier survival horror efforts.

We love *Spaced* anyway, but the third episode of series one is rather special. Having taken some cheap speed with his friend Mike, Tim stays up all night and plays *Resident Evil 2* for far, far too long. The result? He starts hallucinating that zombies are everywhere; not exactly a good thing when resident art weirdo Brian takes him and flatmate Daisy to the theatre for some avant garde performance art, leading to Tim laying out Brian's friend Vulva with a right hook after mistaking him for a flesh-eating foot soldier of the undead.

What makes the appearance of *Resident Evil 2* in *Spaced* particularly interesting is that Simon Pegg's recent movie, *Shaun Of The Dead* (a romantic comedy with zombies), was supposedly inspired by this very episode. Considering it's one of the funniest, goriest films we've seen this year, we'd say that's more than enough for Capcom to be proud of…





▼ What will cheap amphetamines make *you* do today? Tim Bisley ended up meeting the undead…

Somewhere between the arcade and the living room, something went horribly wrong with one of gaming's greatest brawlers…

CONVERSION FROM HELL

Double Dragon

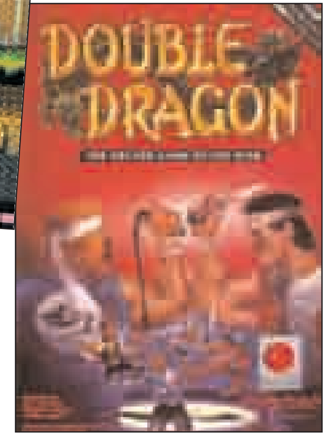
After *Double Dragon* wowed gamers in the arcades, anticipation for the home versions reached fever pitch. Unfortunately, by the time *Double Dragon* was released on home systems, the superior *Target Renegade* was already doing the rounds and even *DD*'s arcade heritage wasn't enough to save it.

Every single 8- and 16-bit version of *Double Dragon* was extremely poor (except for a limited Amstrad CPC run that's been unearthed on the Double Dragon Dojo website) and gamers everywhere were mortified by Binary Design's lacklustre conversion. One of the worst offenders was the horrific Spectrum version that featured potato-headed sprites and some extremely poor collision detection. Indeed, some gamers have been so incensed with the shoddy title that they're working on a Spectrum 128k remake (check out their progress at http://home.btconnect.com/gamestyle/Spectrum48k.htm).

Despite the poor home ports, later versions (most notably the Master System, Atari 2600 and the Game Boy Advance titles) have managed to restore the balance. As conversions from hell go, though, the various *Double Dragon*s have to rank as some of the worst.



▲ Look! Just look at it! Why did they bother…?





R-TYPE (Arcade) Irem, 1987 – Original arcade flyer



Classic Machine

THE HARDWARE WARS BETWEEN 8-BIT OWNERS WERE INTENSE, BUT THE ARRIVAL OF THE ATARI 520 ST MEANT COMMODORE'S 16-BIT AMIGA HAD A FIERCE RIVAL TO FACE...

Although Atari used to be synonymous with home consoles, the games industry crash of 1983 saw a number of other companies begin to gain prominence in a once monopolised industry. Unperturbed by the firm's collapse and eager to release his new computer that was based on the Amiga chipset (something Atari had already paid huge development fees towards), Atari's owner, Jack Tramiel, began to rebuild his empire.

Despite buying back the remains of Atari from Warner, Tramiel was furious to discover that Commodore had bought the Amiga. Realising that his new rival would soon launch a superior product, Tramiel carried on the development of a system that originally began at Commodore. Taking the key engineer of Commodore's project, Shiraz Shivji, with him, Tramiel set to work on what would become the Atari 520 ST.

Considering the machine arrived in shops within a year of its conception, it was unsurprising that the ST was unable to match the Amiga for sheer build or technical quality. However, thanks to being significantly cheaper than its rival – as well as coming equipped with built-in MIDI ports – the ST went on to become extremely popular (especially in Europe) and was of particular interest to musicians who used it as a sequencer and for controlling various instruments.

Of course, gamers were also well catered for and after early letdowns like *Black Lamp*, the likes of *Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe*, *Xenon 2* and *Carrier Command* helped show that the ST was quite capable of playing the latest games. We've lost count of the hours we've wasted on the likes of *Dungeon Master* and *Rainbow Islands* (much better than the Amiga port, in our opinion) not to mention browsing through the huge amount of shareware that was available.

It might not have had the impressive specs of its nearest rival, but the Atari 520 ST still deserves a place in many a gamer's heart and is well worth pulling out from whatever dusty corner yours is currently filling.

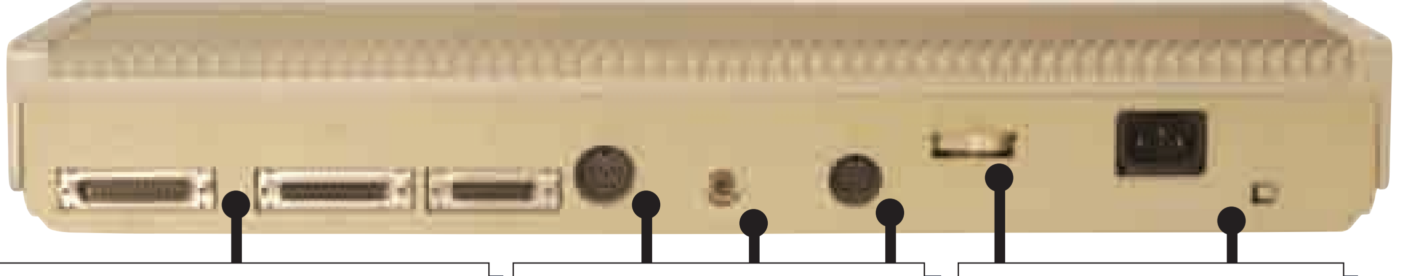
SPECIFICATIONS

PROCESSOR: Motorola 68000
SPEED: 8 Mhz
RAM: 512K
SOUND: Yamaha YM2149
OPERATING SYSTEM: TOS (Tramiel Operating System)
DRIVE: Single-sided 3 1/2" floppy disc drive
DISPLAY MODES: 320X200 (16 colour), 640X200 (four colour), 640X400 (mono), palette of 512 colours

ATARI 520ST

AROUND THE BACK

Turn round your ST and you'd find a baffling array of ports (unless you knew what you were doing…)



The first three ports provided you with access to a modem, printer and hard disc. Hardly revolutionary by today's standards, but then, this was the early Nineties after all…

Here you'd find support for an additional floppy drive and connections for either a television or monitor (like the Amiga, the ST could run through either).

You won't get anywhere without power, and Atari thoughtfully provided the 520 ST with a standard power switch and a reset button.

SHARE THE WEALTH

One of the great things about the Atari ST was the massive amount of public domain software (shareware) that was available for the machine. Public domain is basically software that can be used freely without the user having to worry about licensing or fees. The majority of shareware would often feature animated cartoons or pornography, but there were also a number of decent little games available. Even now, a healthy selection of public domain exists for both the Atari ST and Amiga and thanks to the advent of the internet, getting hold of it is a lot easier.



One problem with Atari games was the amount of discs needed to store the games. You could tell how complex a title was by feeling the weight of the box.

"WHY I LOVE MY ATARI ST"

Although my Amstrad CPC 464 had pride of place for many years, it was inevitable that I would have to embrace the 16-bit generation. With Commodore's impressive Amiga being just outside my meagre budget, Atari's machine made perfect sense. So began an obsessive part of my life that saw me wasting far too much time on the likes of *Speedball 2* and the outstanding *Dungeon Master* (which, incidentally, taught me how to draw meticulously detailed maps on square paper). The ST may now be gathering dust with a stack of shareware titles and old classics, but I'll never forget the glory years of '93 and '94. Ah, happy memories.

DARRAN JONES


Classic Machine

ATARI 520ST





Six of the Best

The Atari boasted plenty of great games, and its Midi capabilities made them sound excellent. These are just some of the best…

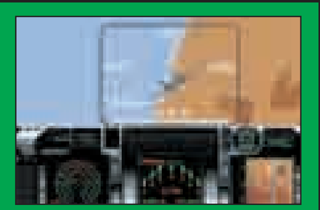
Dungeon Master

Publisher: Mirrorsoft
Year: 1987

Few will be able to forget the revolutionary impact *Dungeon Master* had when it appeared in 1987. Featuring real-time 3D visuals and a unique mouse system, this RPG was like nothing else around and represented a huge leap forward for the genre. Such was its success it went on to spawn four sequels.



F-29 Retaliator



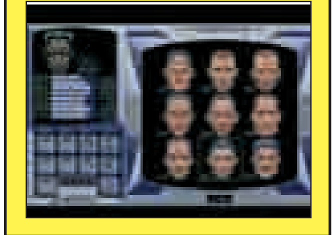
Publisher: Ocean
Year: 1990

While flight simulators were commonplace on the ST and Amiga, *F-29 Retaliator* was one of the better examples and is well worth including here. Featuring gripping gameplay, absorbing missions and some wonderfully smooth visuals, *Retaliator* offered gamers a breathtaking chance to play Top Gun for a day.

Speedball 2

Publisher: Renegade
Year: 1990

You can't make a list of great 16-bit computer games without including the Bitmap Brothers somewhere, so here's the excellent *Speedball 2* yet again. Great futuristic visuals, gripping gameplay and some of the most intense action ever seen in a game all combine to make an essential title.



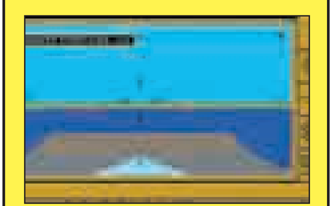
Stunt Car Racer

Publisher: Microprose
Year: 1989

Geoff Crammond's name may be synonymous with PC Grand Prix games now, but *Stunt Car Racer* is still one of his finest hours. Featuring superb wire-frame graphics and some great physics, *Stunt Car Racer* saw you tearing around rollercoaster-style tracks at ridiculous speeds. Still as playable now as it ever was.



Carrier Command



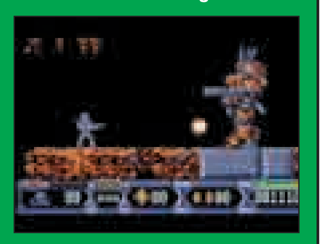
Publisher: Rainbird
Year: 1988

Carrier Command's unique blend of strategy, action and simulation ensured that it's rightly remembered as an all-time classic. While a nasty bug plagued early versions of the game, the ability to pilot various aircraft and even the occasional amphibious craft put *Carrier Command* in a league of its own.

Turrican II

Publisher: Rainbow Arts
Year: 1991

A superb follow-up to the excellent *Turrican*, this sequel had it all. The great visuals, storming soundtrack and frenzied gameplay were in perfect synergy with the eye-popping weaponry and fantastic level design. Unfortunately, it now looks like the expected remake by Factor 5 has been cancelled for good.



Last Month's BBC Micro Screenshots

Hopefully, our coverage of the BBC Micro brought back memories – but did you know all the games?

FIRST ROW
Meteors, Sinistar, Atic Atac, Attack On Alpha Centauri, Gorf, Barbarian II, Killer Gorilla, BMX On The Moon, Boris In The Underworld, Castle Quest

SECOND ROW
Jumbo, Chess, Cholo, Chuckie Egg, Citadel, Joust, Countdown To Doom, Croaker, Cybertron Mission, Danger UXB

THIRD ROW
Daredevil Dennis, Disk System, Drain Mania, Drogna, Gisburne's Castle, Exile, Felix In The Factory, Flowers Of Crystal, Fortress, Knightlore

FOURTH ROW
Frenzy, Geoff Capes' Strongman, Ghouls, Elite, Planetoid, Granny's Garden, Hunchback, Imogen, Jack And The Beanstalk, JCB Digger

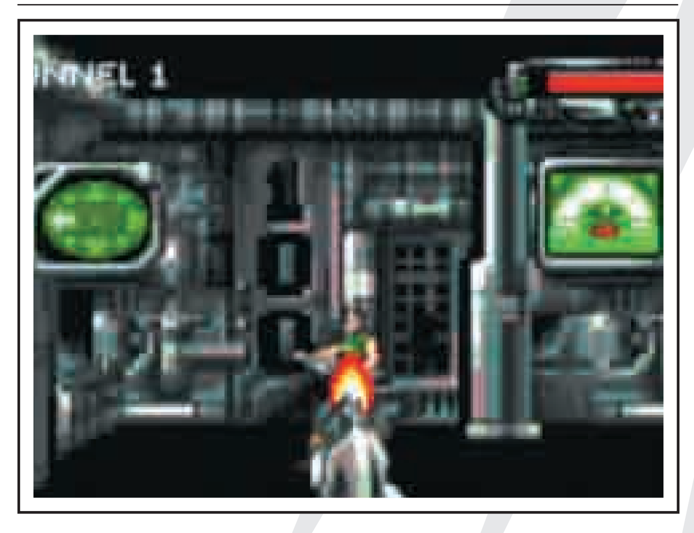
FIFTH ROW
Jet Set Willy, Codename Droid, Castle Ravenskull, Sam Fox Strip Poker, Frak!, Labyrinth, Last Ninja, Treasure Hunt, Loderunner, Lunar Jetman

SIXTH ROW
Stryker's Run, Manic Miner, Airwolf, Monsters, Stairway To Hell, Mr Wiz, Munchyman, Paperboy, Pengo, Pipemania

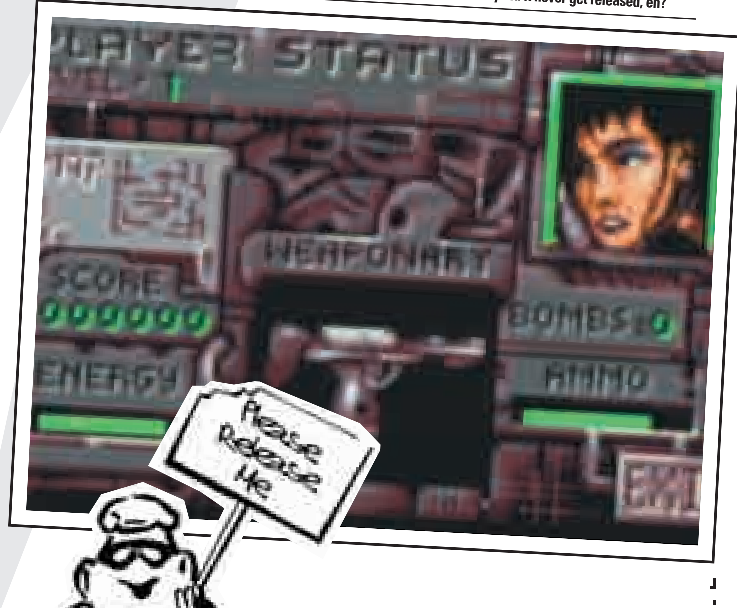
SEVENTH ROW
Barbarian, Question Of Sport, Repton: Around The World In 80 Screens, Blagger, Twin Kingdom Valley, Snake, Snapper, Snooker, Space Maze, Sporting Triangles

EIGHTH ROW
Mr Wimpy, The Lost Crystal, Magic Mushrooms, The Sentinel, Thrust, Trafalgar, Life Of Repton, Arcadians, Wallaby, Wizadore

▼ Yes, that *is* a Marine you're shooting at; no, you don't get to see Sigourney Weaver in her pants.



▼ Look – there's nothing wrong with this game (well, 'weaponary' aside), so why did it never get released, eh?



ALIEN VS PREDATOR

Digging up the titles that never made it as far as your local game store

Format: Lynx
Publisher: Atari
Developer: Rebellion
Release: N/A



Some things, it would seem, are doomed to failure, with a classic example being Atari's Lynx. It might have been technically ahead of its time but a lack of third-party support, a hopelessly short battery life, and the machine's sheer size soon saw Atari's handheld trailing behind both SEGA's Game Gear and Nintendo's perennial Game Boy.

Nevertheless, Atari wasn't willing to give up the fight, so it set Rebellion to work on a Lynx conversion of its impressive Jaguar title *Alien Vs Predator*. Thanks to the Lynx's rotation capabilities and hardware scaling, Rebellion planned to recreate a portable version of one of the Jaguar's biggest hits and quickly went to work.

Unfortunately, despite nearing completion (EEPROM carts of a supposedly near-finished version of the game were produced), one of the most impressive-looking Lynx titles never got as far as the high street. It looked like Rebellion's game was going to remain in development hell and become another gaming 'what if'…

However, like the xenomorphic foes on which the game was based, Rebellion's lost title wasn't prepared to leave quietly and *Alien Vs Predator* eventually appeared in ROM form on various websites.

Although there were plenty of problems with the code, it was easy to see that Rebellion and Atari would have had a hit on their hands had the game actually seen the light of day. The smooth, block-scrolling, bitmap-designed levels were extremely convincing and moved along at an impressive rate, helping to create a very claustrophobic atmosphere.

Sound, on the other hand, while being faithful to the original Jaguar music, seemed rather out of place on the handheld machine and greatly diminished the atmosphere that the game's impressive graphics engine had created.

Although a playable Alien wasn't available in the preview code, players were able to gain access to either a Marine or a Predator. The first few missions consisted of simply collecting a certain number of bombs and getting them to the relevant checkpoint (although we still haven't been able to get off the first Predator stage), but they soon got increasingly tougher thanks to the mind-bending mazes you had to negotiate.

Sure, there were a few things that definitely needed changing (many enemies wouldn't die when hit, and your foes seemed to consist of nothing more than Marines regardless of which side you were on), but even the briefest of plays revealed just how ahead of its peers the Lynx was. It's a crying shame that *Alien Vs Predator* never got the commercial release it so obviously deserved. There's no justice in the world…



ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

The concept of Alien Vs Predator appeared in 1990 when Dark Horse's comic-book author Randy Stradley thought it would be a great idea if Predators decided to hunt Aliens. Since then, several games have appeared on various formats and have included such highlights as the excellent Capcom beat-'em-up, the technically impressive (for its time) Jaguar version and the superb PC series (also developed by Rebellion).

The franchise has gone from strength to strength (although the less said about *Alien Vs Predator: Extinction* the better) and is soon to return to the medium from which the games' protagonists were spawned. *Alien Vs Predator* will finally receive a cinematic release this summer, and while there's no word yet on whether it's any good or not, you can be sure that there's going to be a game of the film…

THEY LIVE!

Classic Feature

Four NES classics have been spruced up for the Cube, but just how well do they stand up now?

One of the most interesting aspects of retro gaming is the fact that while it's a part of many gamers' pasts, certain individuals (and companies) still embrace it. Indeed, arcades still exist today that deal solely in old machines and it's possible to even buy brand new Spectrum and C64 games (as well as titles for countless other supposedly dead systems).

Over the next few months, we'll be continuing to pursue our love of classic games, but we'll also be looking at how retro gaming is influencing the current generation. These recent Hudson remakes for the Japanese GameCube are a typical example of retro titles given a new lease of life. They may have updated visuals and sound, but the gameplay on each disc harks all the way back to when the games first appeared on the NES and in many cases, level design is completely identical – it's because of this that we decided to cover them here and not in the reviews section of the main mag.

So without further ado, join us as we take a look at Hudson's remakes and see how well they compare to the original games that inspired them…



3D isn't always the way forward…

Lode Runner first appeared on the NES in 1984 and was Hudson's debut on the machine. Although the level design was fairly basic, the game itself was actually a lot of fun. Taking control of the eponymous Lode Runner, you had to negotiate platforms and ladders to retrieve all the gold from each level while digging holes to trap your enemies. One of the most interesting features of *Lode Runner* was its level editor, which was extremely well put together for such an old game.

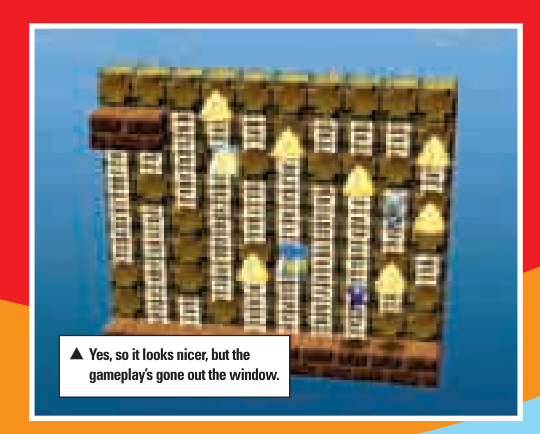
Although *Cubic Lode Runner* uses a 3D perspective like the N64's *Lode Runner 3D*, it keeps the original character design and brings back the familiar ladders that the N64 version lacked. Considering the move to the third dimension, however, it's surprising how similar this feels to the original NES title and Hudson has ensured that the map layouts have remained as faithful to the original as far as possible. The level editor is also here, and is a lot of fun once you understand how to use it.

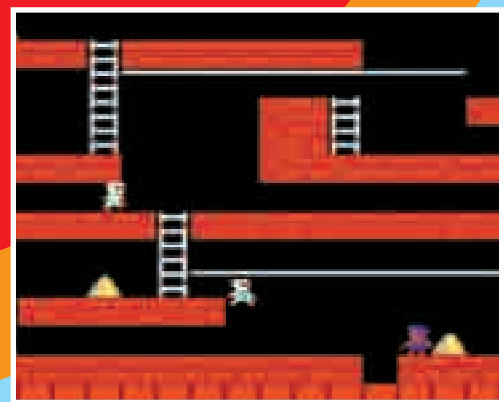
Visually, *Cubic Lode Runner* is surprisingly basic and sticks to the NES's look a little too closely; that said, it does feature superior animation, which adds some much needed character to proceedings. Sadly, the move to three dimensions makes for some frustrating moments. Although you can use the Left and Right Triggers to rotate the screen, you'll often end up getting killed by an enemy without realising it – it takes real perseverance and skill to complete the trickier stages.



Despite its drawbacks, and providing you can pick it up for a reasonable price, you'll find *Cubic Lode Runner* pleasantly diverting.

Presentation:	55%
Graphics:	58%
Sound:	57%
Gameplay:	68%
Lifespan:	65%
OVERALL	59%


▲ Yes, so it looks nicer, but the gameplay's gone out the window.







▲ Despite the graphical update, *Star Soldier* has kept its old-school gameplay. Wave goodbye to your social life…

Get ready to fire until your fingers bleed – think you can handle that, soldier?

STAR SOLDIER



Star Soldier debuted on the NES in 1986 and was an extremely hectic blaster. As with many shoot-'em-ups, the game's premise was simple but enjoyable: 'if it moves shoot it, if it doesn't, shoot it anyway'. Hudson's title featured swarms of opponents, a nice little power-up system (that would gradually see your ship firing in five directions) and was one of the first games to have a solid scoring system.

TO INFINITY…

Star Soldier's intensive shooting was a welcome change from the many platformers and fighters that used to appear on the NES. Levels featured mini bosses and the obligatory end-of-level behemoths, and the whole game had a unique style that later made its way to the highly popular PC Engine games (*Super Star Soldier, Final Soldier* and *Soldier Blade*). Although *Star Soldier* skipped a generation by never appearing on the SNES, an N64 version was released that featured the popular time attack (or Caravan) modes of the PC Engine games.

After the fairly disappointing *Cubic Lode Runner*, Hudson has fully redeemed itself; *Star Soldier* is an excellent homage to the original game and is a great blaster in its own right. One of the most interesting things is how similar this looks to the original NES classic; many of the waves of enemies are identical and fans of *Star Soldier* and *Super Star Soldier* will immediately find themselves at home. Menus throughout are extremely slick and well put together and Hudson has included the superb two- and five-minute time attack modes from the PC Engine game.

… AND BEYOND!

While the main game is a very faithful recreation of the original NES classic, the real enjoyment can be found in the horribly addictive time attack modes. You'll constantly be drawn back to try and beat your last high score (in the finest arcade tradition) and the well-crafted gameplay means that you'll always progress that little bit further. Although holding down the fire button will unleash a stream of laser death, it's fairly weak and isn't as powerful as simply mashing the button for all you're worth.

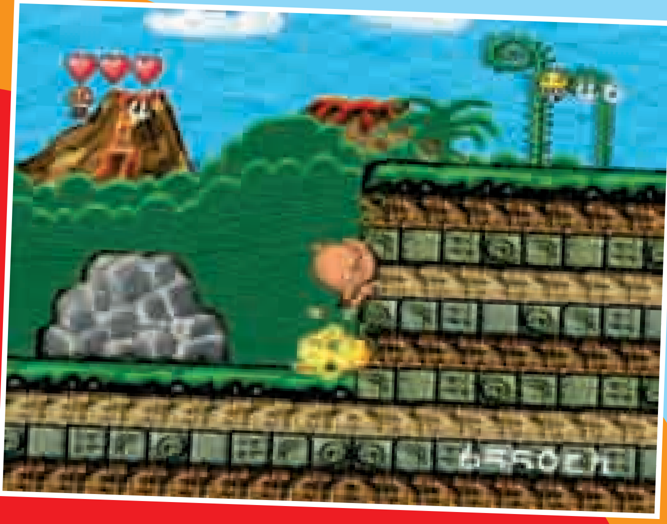
Aesthetically, *Star Soldier* is pretty impressive and while it won't trouble more traditional GameCube titles, Hudson has done a fine job of transforming the original game's sprites into their new polygon forms. Add some rocking music and some solid spot effects and Hudson has a winner on its hands. Definitely worth tracking down.

▲ Okay, it doesn't look like much, but this was the best blaster on the NES. Trust us. Please?

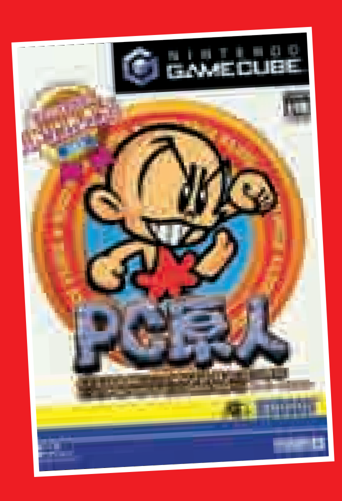
Presentation:	87%
Graphics:	80%
Sound:	85%
Gameplay:	93%
Lifespan:	86%
OVERALL	86%

The inappropriately named Bonk the caveboy would like you to join him once again…

PC KID



▲ Scaling walls with your teeth is inadvisable, but kudos to Bonk for having a go.



PC Genjin (or PC Kid as he was more commonly known) is the odd one out here, as he actually appeared on the PC Engine first; PC Kid was NEC's mascot and went on to star in two more HuCard adventures, as well as a Super CD title. Basically a prehistoric caveboy with attitude, PC Kid would walk through cartoony landscapes and headbutt anything that was foolish enough to get in his way. Dinosaurs, flowers, birds… all fell beneath his fearsome noggin and PC Engine owners had a new platform hero.

Given the unfortunate moniker Bonk for his Western release, PC Kid arrived on the NES in 1986. The huge cartoon visuals really pushed Nintendo's machine to its limits and the game ended up looking very similar to the original PC Engine title.

USE YOUR HEAD

You'd expect Hudson to treat its revered mascot with some tender loving care and we're pleased to reveal that *PC Kid* is our favourite game of Hudson's new series.

Visuals throughout are superb, with great animation and a lovely cartoon style; PC Kid himself is a real character and stomps around the screen in a very endearing fashion. Whether he's nutting dinosaurs or using his gnashers to climb up cliffs, he looks simply adorable and is a credit to the designers at Hudson.

Add some wonderfully bouncy tunes and a range of chirpy sound effects and it's safe to say that Hudson has done a superb job of recreating one of its most distinctive games.

BACK IN TIME

Like *Star Soldier*, *PC Kid* is extremely faithful to the original game and, in many places, much of the level layout is identical. Monsters appear in the same places, locations are strikingly familiar and the gameplay is as enjoyable as ever.

While it doesn't quite match Nintendo's classic Mario franchise for design flair, there's still plenty to explore and it always feels like you're doing something new. There are dozens of items to collect on your travels and a large menagerie of dinosaurs to defeat; locations throughout are nicely varied and you'll even get the chance to swim through a dinosaur's innards.

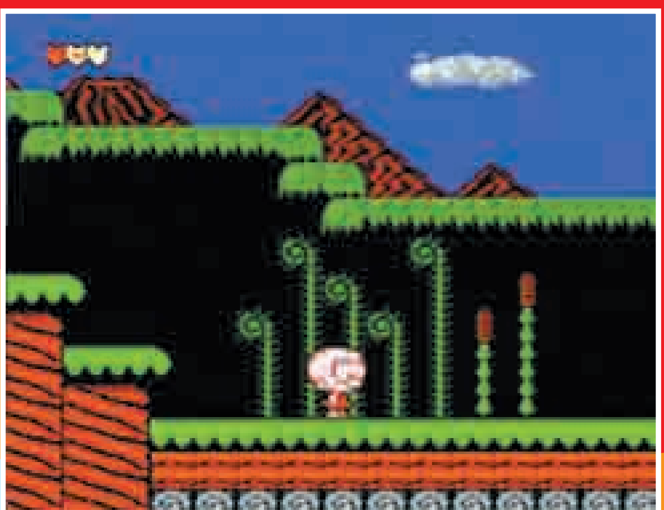
If you're a fan of classic platformers, we heartily recommend you pick up *PC Kid*.

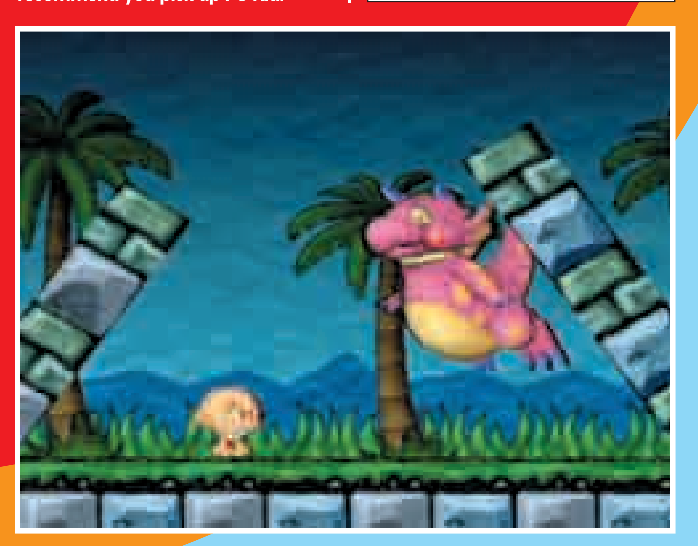
MORE BONK

After the success of *PC Kid*, Hudson released some excellent sequels that continued to push the PC Engine's sound and visuals. *PC Genjin 2* featured some fantastic bosses and plenty of cool bonus stages, while *PC Genjin 3* added a second player to the equation and some truly massive sprites. *CD Denjin: Rockabilly Paradise* was a slick shooter for the PC Engine CD, while *PC Denjin: Punkic Cyborgs* was the HuCard follow-up. Finally there was an RPG featuring PC Kid called *RPC Kid*. Clever, that.

Presentation:	78%
Graphics:	90%
Sound:	87%
Gameplay:	94%
Lifespan:	88%
OVERALL	89%

▼ As this was a later NES game, Hudson managed to perform miracles with some very impressive sprites.







▲ Enemies now attack in 2.5D, so you'll have to watch for things like these diving fishes coming out of the screen.





ADVENTURE ISLAND

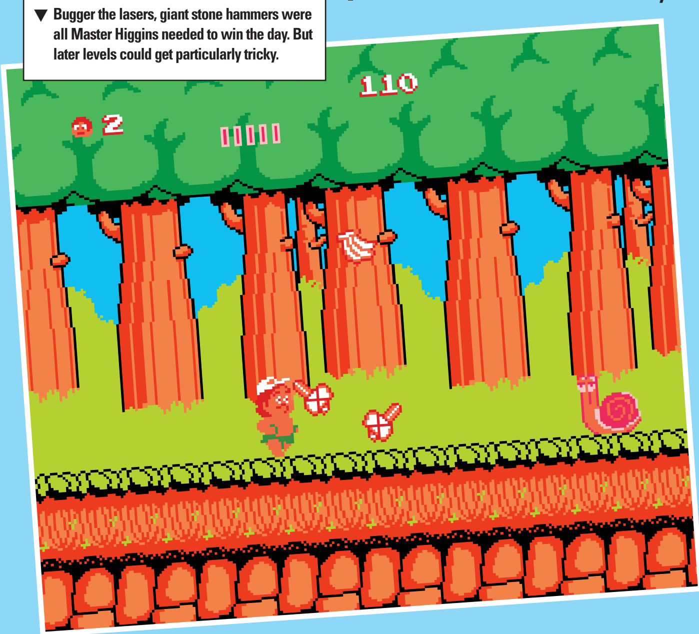
Bet you've never seen a caveman ride a skateboard

You may have noticed how the original *Adventure Island* is very similar to SEGA's *Wonderboy*. Both titles were created by Escape, but Hudson was forced to change the name of the series (and rename Wonderboy Master Higgins) due to SEGA claiming the Wonderboy trademark. SEGA's series eventually became more RPG-oriented, while the Hudson games continued with the formula that had become so popular in the late Eighties.

Controlling a caveman (what is it with Hudson and prehistoric characters?), you had to make your way through a scrolling level before your vitality ran out. You could collect fruit to increase your health and crack open eggs that would unleash useful power ups like skateboards and stone hammers.

There were plenty of platforms and enemies to negotiate and you needed to be fairly skilled to get to the later levels. At the end of every fourth stage was a huge boss who could normally be defeated by knocking his head off his shoulders, although this would be replaced by an even fiercer visage. It might play quite simply now, but *Adventure Island* was a classic for its time.

▼ Bugger the lasers, giant stone hammers were all Master Higgins needed to win the day. But later levels could get particularly tricky.



HAMMER TIME

The first thing you'll notice about Hudson's remake is how great it looks compared to the other three titles – Master Higgins' world is incredibly lush and features some sumptuous pre-rendered backgrounds. While the enemies are identical to their 8-bit counterparts, they've received the same care and attention as the impressive scenery and give *Adventure Island* a very distinctive look.

In fact, the only thing we're disappointed about is the lack of charm that Higgins himself possesses (although, admittedly, this was also a problem with the NES title). After the raucous, thumping tunes of *Super Adventure Island*, it's also a bit disheartening to listen to the Cube's soundtrack. Granted, it's faithful to *Adventure Island*, but we'd liked to have heard something a little funkier.

BATTLE OF THE CAVEMEN

We hate to admit it, but in our minds Wonderboy is the definitive platforming caveman. Master Higgins may have a funky hat, but few can resist the blonde locks and cute dimples of Wonderboy (and his girlfriend was much hotter).

Sadly, the gameplay feels a bit tired and it's little wonder that SEGA decided to give later games in the Wonderboy series their RPG slant. There's only so much fun you can have leaping across chasms and avoiding rolling boulders, and before long you'll be heading back to *PC Kid* for your platform fix. *Adventure Island* isn't a bad game, it just doesn't have the longevity of *Star Soldier* and *PC Kid*.

Presentation:	60%
Graphics:	93%
Sound:	76%
Gameplay:	70%
Lifespan:	68%
OVERALL	76%

SHMUPS

family tree

Shoot-'em-ups (or shmups, if you prefer) have been a staple of the arcade scene since the late Seventies. With games like *Psyvariar 2* and *Ikaruga* still proving popular with today's gamers, we felt it was time to look at some of the most influential vertical shooters to blast into our arcades.

SKY RAIDER



1978

It might look archaic by today's standards, but this was the world's first scrolling shooter and was horribly addictive to boot. Using your on-screen cursor, you had to destroy as many objects as possible. Fortunately, they didn't fire back at you, but this was still challenging.

GALAXIAN



1979

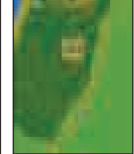
Galaxian was the first ever game to feature enemies that actually flew down the screen and attacked you. It was a world away from the regimented attacks of *Space Invaders* and is still highly playable. Plenty of clones followed, but nothing can touch the mighty *Galaxian*.

MOON CRESTA

1980

Now we're getting there. *Moon Cresta* featured many staples of current-day shooters, including power ups and different attack waves. A nice touch was the way your ship split into three to represent each of your available lives, but the last ship was absolutely massive.

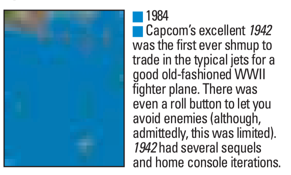
XEVIOUS



1983

Xevious was one of the first shooters to have proper scrolling backgrounds (as opposed to the scrolling stars of many previous titles) and also enabled your craft to drop bombs. *Super Xevious* appeared in 1984 and featured tougher, more varied enemies.

1942



1984

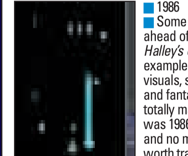
Capcom's excellent *1942* was the first ever shmup to trade in the typical jets for a good old-fashioned WWII fighter plane. There was even a roll button to let you avoid enemies (although, admittedly, this was limited). *1942* had several sequels and home console iterations.

LIBERATION

1984

Although fairly generic, *Liberation* was the first vertical shooter to feature a helicopter. Once a level was cleared and your helicopter had landed, you carried on your mission via a tank or jeep. Sadly, apart from your mode of transport, there was little to set this game apart.

HALLEY'S COMET



1986

Some games are way ahead of their time and *Halley's Comet* is a perfect example. Great-looking visuals, superb power ups and fantastic gameplay totally made you forget it was 1986. A brilliant blaster and no mistake, this is well worth tracking down.

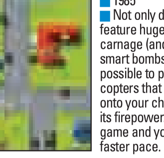
SLAP FIGHT



1986

Like *Gradius, Slap Fight* featured a weapons bar from which you could select firepower by collecting a set amount of stars. This title had superb level design and a varied array of power ups that actually bolted on to your ship. A later Mega Drive conversion was hideous.

TIGER-HELI



1985

Not only did *Tiger-Heli* feature huge amounts of carnage (and some nifty smart bombs) it was also possible to pick up mini copters that would strap onto your chopper to add to its firepower. Complete the game and you'd restart at a faster pace.

TWIN BEE

1985

The vertical yin to *Parodious*' horizontally scrolling yang, *Twin Bee* was a basic-looking cute-'em-up that let two players play simultaneously. Shooting the game's many Bells would make them change colour and provided the player with different power ups.

DANGAR UFO ROBO

1985

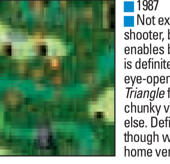
Dangar UFO Robo enabled you to take charge of a huge robot that could temporarily split into three parts. There were many character-based shooters available, but this was one of the quirkiest and earliest that we found. Characters-driven shmups later became a sub-genre.

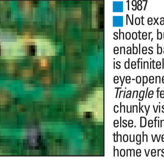
1943

1987

Capcom innovated yet again, with *1943* becoming the first shooter to feature an energy bar as opposed to multiple lives. It was even possible for players to share energy by flying over each other for a few seconds. *1943* later got an update, but only in Japan.

BERMUDA TRIANGLE





1987

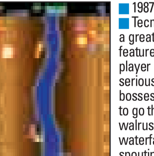
Not exactly a superb shooter, but any game that enables backwards scrolling is definitely going to be an eye-opener. *Bermuda Triangle* featured some nice chunky visuals, but not a lot else. Definitely worth a look, though we've never seen a home version.

TWIN COBRA

1987

Known as *Kyukyoku Tiger* in Japan, *Twin Cobra* was a helicopter shooter that shared plenty of similarities with the excellent *Raiden* and also used the same boardset as Taito's *Flying Shark*. Unfortunately, it's since been eclipsed by a superb sequel.

GEMINI WING



1987

Tecmo's *Gemini Wing* was a great cutesy shooter that featured an excellent two-player mode and some seriously weird end-of-level bosses. Special mention has to go the Malteser-spewing walrus that lived in a waterfall, and the laser-spouting second boss.

DRAGON SPIRIT

1987

Dragon Spirit saw you in control of a huge blue dragon and proved to be very popular in the late Eighties. Collecting power ups would add extra heads to your body, which would increase your dragon's firepower. *Dragon Sabre* was the average sequel.

ARMED FORMATION F

1988

While its organic look was blatantly borrowed from *R-Type, Armed Formation F* did feature a nice power-up system. It was possible to place your weapons in different positions in order to maximise your ship's effectiveness. What a shame the levels were so generic…

IMAGE FIGHT

1988

Image Fight by Irem is easily one of the toughest shooters we've ever played. There was a decent amount of weapons on offer and it was even possible to throw some, boomerang-style, at your opponents. Irem is still regarded as one of the premier shmup developers.

TRUXTON

1988

Truxton was an extremely solid shooter that was known as *Tatsujin* in Japan. The game featured massive smart bombs, distinctive power ups and also received high-quality Mega Drive and PC Engine conversions. Well worth a play. *Truxton II* took the series even further.

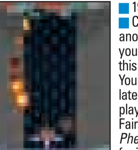
METAL HAWK

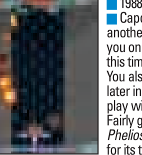
1988

Complete with its own custom cabinet, *Metal Hawk* was an excellent helicopter-based shmup that had a very distinctive look. Created by Namco, this title had fantastic visuals, great power ups and some superb scaling effects. A great alternative to the traditional shooter.

CUTE-'EM-UPS

PHELIOS





1988

Capcom's *Phelios* was another shooter to place you on a mythical beast, but this time it was a Pegasus. You also sprouted wings later in the game and could play with a second player. Fairly generic nowadays, *Phelios* was a great blaster for its time.

VAPOUR TRAIL: HYPER OFFENCE FORMATION

1989

Multiple scrolling speeds, fantastic parallax and a great rock soundtrack were just a few of the features that separated Data East's superb shooter from its peers. Though reasonably tough, it was never unfair and is still good for a quick blast.

NEBULASRAY

1990

A stunning-looker shooter for its time, *Nebulasray* featured amazing pre-rendered backdrops and some extremely intense gameplay. The coin-op board is extremely hard to get hold of and goes for a fair price on eBay, but if you can find one you're in for a treat.

RAIDEN

1990

Raiden managed to combine slick visuals with pulsating gameplay and intense enemy waves to create a gripping shooter. Such was its popularity it nearly received as many home conversions as Irem's classic *R-Type* and had plenty of sequels.

ASHURA BLASTER

1990

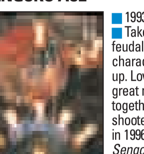
Ashura Blaster gave you a choice of different smart bombs at the beginning of each intense level. A particular favourite was the bomb that was linked to a space satellite. Needless to say, the end result was pretty spectacular and eye melting.

BELLS 'N' WHISTLES

1991

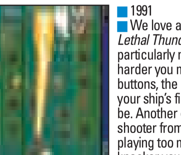
Konami's sequel to *Twin Bee* featured prettier visuals and even more manic gameplay than its predecessor, making for a pleasant diversion from all the serious shooters. It was known as *Detana!! Twin Bee* in Japan and was eventually ported to the Saturn.

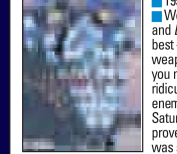
SENGOKU ACE



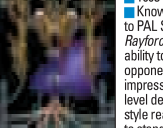
1993

Take a flight through feudal Japan in this great character-based shoot-'em-up. Lovely design and some great music blended together to create a superb shooter. A sequel appeared in 1996 and was followed by *Sengoku Blade*. The third title appeared on the Saturn.

LETHAL THUNDER

1991
We love a gimmick and *Lethal Thunder*'s was a particularly nice touch. The harder you mashed the fire buttons, the more impressive your ship's firepower would be. Another great little shooter from Irem, but playing too much would knacker your wrists…

BATSUGAN

1993
We love a frantic shooter and *Batsugan* is one of the best – ridiculously oversized weapons are just the thing you need when faced with ridiculous amounts of enemies. Received a great Saturn conversion that proved that SEGA's machine was shump-fans' heaven.

RAYFORCE



1993
Known as *Layer Section* to PAL Saturn owners, *Rayforce* featured the unique ability to lock on to your opponents and release impressive lasers. Great level design and a unique style really helped *Rayforce* to stand out from the crowd. The sequel was just as good.

HELICOPTERS

DAIOH
1993
Another oddity, *Daioh* is famous for featuring the most buttons ever in an arcade shoot-'em-up. Although very tough to play (the button juggling was on a par with *Defender*), the six fire buttons, decent power ups and great bosses took you back for one more go.

DONPACHI
1995
Atlus/Cave has made a great many superb shooters, but *DonPachi* is still one of our favourites. It wasn't as manic as its sequel, but this was still great stuff. A Saturn port also appeared and was a faithful conversion. *Donpachi*'s bosses were great – like the mecha bee.

STRIKERS 1945
1995
Obviously inspired by Capcom's *1942* series, Psikyo's *Strikers* series was set in an alternative WWII and came complete with massive mechas. The game went on to spawn four sequels (including a rather lacklustre Neo Geo version).

BATTLE GAREGGA
1996
You want intensity? Try *Battle Garegga* and prepare for some seriously hectic gameplay. Wonderful visuals, gripping gameplay and a superb ranking system helps make *Battle Garegga* one of our favourite shooters. It's available for the Saturn but is extremely expensive.

TWIN COBRA 2

1995
It might have taken a few years to appear, but Taito's follow-up to *Twin Cobra* was well worth the wait. With better level design, updated visuals and cool bosses, this was a worthy sequel. Like *Twin Cobra* you could take out ground and air targets, and collect power ups.

GAME PARADISE: THE MASTER OF SHOOTING


1995
Shooters don't get much weirder than this. Featuring some crazy characters (including a bomb-throwing pig) and superb cartoony visuals, *Game Paradise* is a unique experience. Yet another shooter that received a great Saturn home conversion.

KINGDOM GRAND PRIX

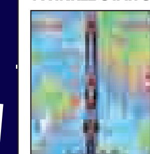
1994
Now this was a very strange beast. Raizing/Eighting's *Kingdom Grand Prix* threw you into a weird experience featuring shooting and racing. It made for some interesting strategies (race or shoot?) and had some great (and tough) bosses.

DANGUN FEVERON
1998
Themed around the disco scene, *Dangun Feveron* is simply sublime. Fantastic remixed disco tunes, crazy bosses and mental smart bombs made for a totally unique experience. One to play with the sound turned up loud and the lights turned off.

SOUKYUU GURENTI

1996
Known as *Terra Diver* in the West, *Soukyuu Gurenti* was another superb shooter from Raizing/Eighting. Featuring an extremely strong weapon system and some distinctive visuals, it was published, surprisingly, by Electronic Arts. Hardcore gamers still call it *Souky*.

DO DONPACHI
1996
Known as being one of the first 'Berserk' shooters, *Do DonPachi* was not for the faint-hearted. Right from the off, you were armed with ridiculous weaponry and faced off against huge numbers of enemies and bullets. A true test of skill and no mistake.

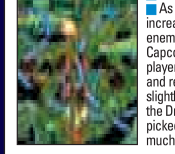
TWINKLE STAR SPRITES

1996
Such was the popularity of the Mega Drive game it eventually spawned its own arcade conversion, a superb puzzle-based shooter that saw you competing against a variety of opponents. Fiendishly addictive, this went on to receive a Dreamcast conversion.

SHIELD SHMUPS

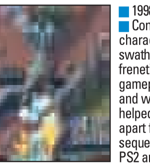
RADIANT SILVERGUN
1998
Treasure's *Radiant Silvergun* is arguably the greatest shoot-'em-up ever created. Three-player action, some superb weapon and level design, not to mention boss after boss made this an unforgettable experience. Funnily enough, it was another great Saturn title.

RAIDEN FIGHTERS JET
1998
This may have been the last in a new generation of *Raiden* games, but it was definitely the best. There were a massive amount of ships to choose from and the explosions and effects were superb. A highly addictive blaster that was a great showcase for the franchise.

GUWANGE
1999
Guwange was another title set in feudal Japan, but had the added draw of including lashings of gore – shoot a demon and it would explode in a satisfying spray of claret. This was another cool shooter from Atlus/Cave, but is definitely one to play with the lights on.

GIGA WING

1998
As shoot-'em-ups featured increasing amounts of enemies and bullets to avoid, Capcom decided to give players a shield to reflect and repel bullets. Now slightly dated, it appeared on the Dreamcast. It can be picked up for a few pounds – much less than the sequel.

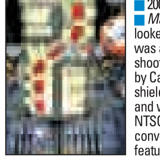
ESP RA.DE.


1998
Control a psychic character and unleash a swathe of destruction in this frenetic bullet sprayer. Manic gameplay, superb power ups and wonderful visuals really helped to set *ESP RA.DE.* apart from the crowd. Its sequel will soon be on the PS2 and Xbox.

1994: THE LOOP MASTER
2000
Capcom's last shooter in the *1942* series may have failed to offer the excitement of the Cave-inspired *19XX*, but still managed to deliver some solid gameplay, and it traded the vertical monitor for a horizontal one. Yet another shooter to feature the dreaded energy bar.

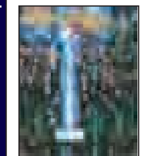
IKARUGA
2000
Treasure returned with an unofficial follow-up to *Radiant Silvergun*. Your craft could switch between two colours, which would allow you to absorb the relevant coloured bullets. Manic gameplay and superb level design cemented *Ikaruga*'s status as an instant classic.

PSYVARIAR
2000
Psyvariar was the first title to use the 'buzz technique' (a system that would award you with points for actually grazing enemy bullets). *Psyvariar* is now available for a very good price on the PS2. Track this down and you'll get a short but very satisfying shmup.

MARS MATRIX

2000
Mars Matrix may have looked awful, but underneath was an extremely solid shooter. Like *Giga Wing* (also by Capcom) this featured a shield that could repel bullets and went on to receive an NTSC Dreamcast conversion.The home port featured plenty of extras.

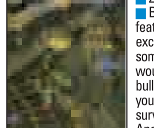
CHANGE AIR BLADE

1999
An interesting shooter from Sammy that allowed the second player to morph into a boss. Despite the intriguing set-up, *Change Air Blade* was a fairly generic shooter that looked rather tired compared to similar games and soon disappeared into obscurity.

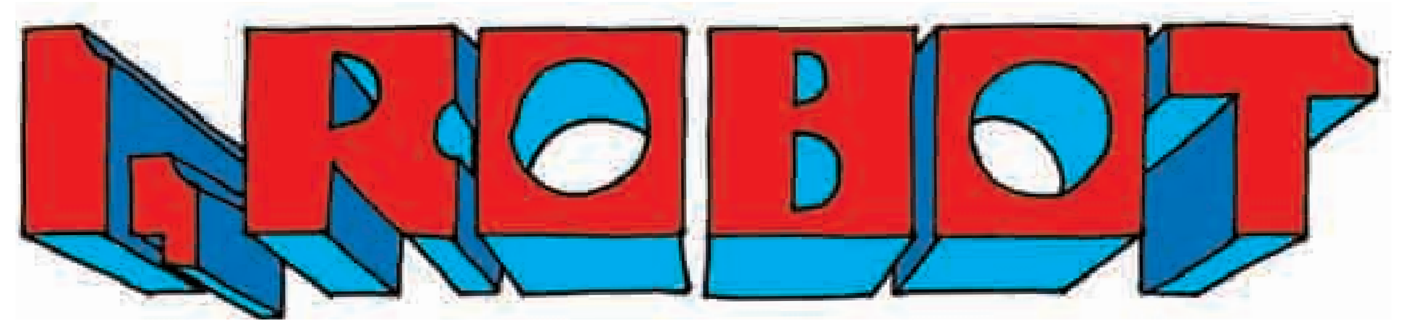
DO DONPACHI DAI OUJOU

2003
The fourth *DonPachi* game from Atlus/Cave was business as usual and retained the same superb gameplay the rest of the series had offered. It was recently released on the PlayStation2 and has gained even higher recognition. A quality shooter.

SHIKIGAMI NO SHIRO II
2003
After the disappointing first game (it was far too slow) Alfa System pressed all the right buttons (pun intended) and hit back with a superb sequel. *Shikigami II* used a similar technique to *Psyvariar*, but added some superb anime-style visuals.

PSYVARIAR 2: THE WILL TO FABRICATE
2003
There were even more bullets in *Psyvariar 2* and, as a result, the gameplay was even more hectic. A worthy follow-up with a huge following in Japan, it's a must for any shooter fan. Like *Psyvariar*, it's also available on the PS2 and the ill-fated Dreamcast.

GIGA WING 2

2001
Breathtaking sequel that featured gorgeous visuals, excellent weapons and some fantastic sound. Levels would become packed with bullets and careful use of your shield was needed to survive the onslaught. Another title to receive an NTSC Dreamcast release.





A GAME THAT WAS SO AHEAD OF ITS TIME, THE PUBLIC JUST COULDN'T KEEP UP…

Format: Arcade
Release: 1983
Publisher: Atari
Developer: In-House

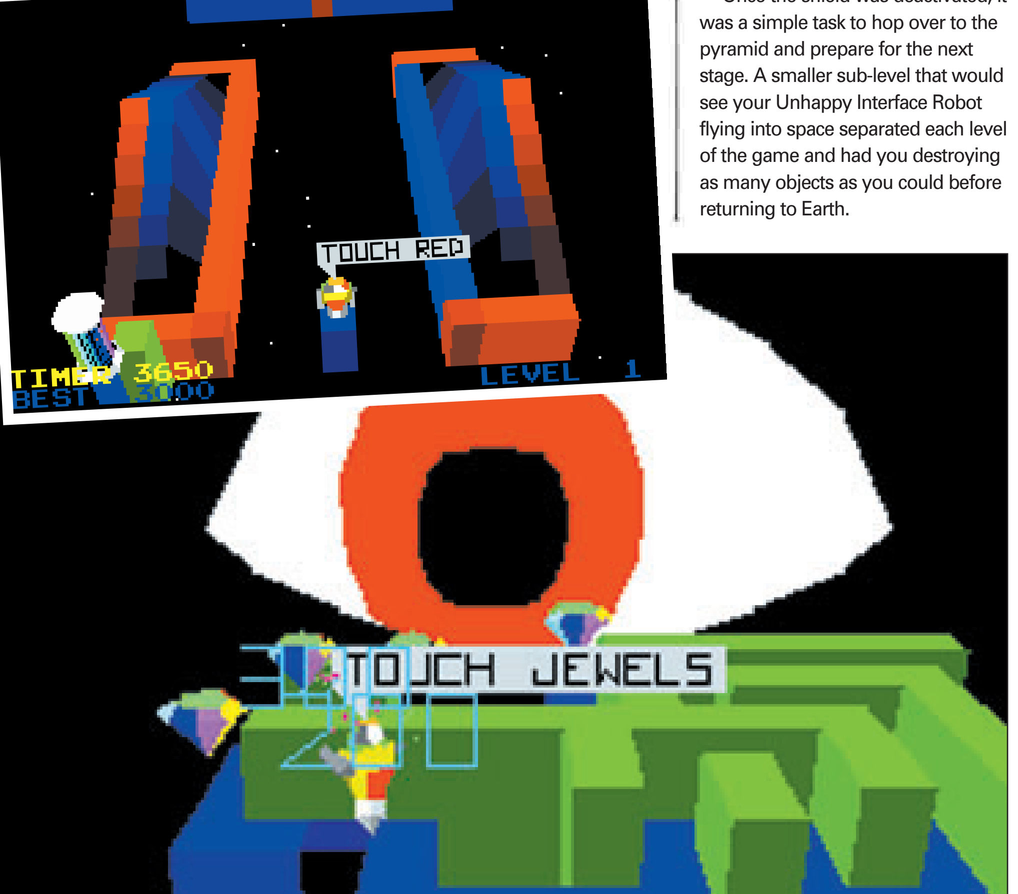
In the early Eighties, Atari had a vision. Eager to push the gaming boundaries further than ever before, it was the company's dream to create a polygonal driving game; when it became obvious that current hardware wasn't up to the task though, Atari took a change of direction and *I,Robot* became a reality (incidentally, it took until the 1989 release of *Hard Drivin'* for Atari to get its polygonal racer).

Created by Dave Theurer – the brain behind *Tempest* – *I, Robot* was initially called *Ice Castles*, though this was later changed when Theurer added an Orwell-esque storyline. Players were cast into the role of Unhappy Interface Robot #1984 who was rising up against big brother and his many Evil Eyes. Each Evil Eye guarded the entrance to a pyramid and was protected by a shield that could only be penetrated by turning all the red spaces on the playing field blue. On top of this, players had to avoid the game's many enemies, and the huge Evil Eyes would destroy you if you jumped whenever they turned red.

Once the shield was deactivated, it was a simple task to hop over to the pyramid and prepare for the next stage. A smaller sub-level that would see your Unhappy Interface Robot flying into space separated each level of the game and had you destroying as many objects as you could before returning to Earth.

While the game sounded simple on paper, witnessing it in action was another matter entirely, and even now *I, Robot* is still a striking (albeit simple-looking) title. While polygons had already featured in earlier games, *I, Robot* was the first title to ever feature flat-shaded, polygon graphics complete with no hidden surfaces. Indeed, when you consider that popular games of the time were *Mr Do's Castle*, *SpyHunter* and *Bank Panic*, you realise just how ambitious *I, Robot* really was. But although Atari may have created a historically important piece of work, the public weren't ready for *I, Robot*'s unique look or its demanding gameplay and the game was a commercial disaster.

Still, for the hardcore gamers that did understand it, *I, Robot* proved to be an immensely satisfying title that held an astounding amount of depth. Although the very early stages were rather easy to negotiate, your Unhappy Interface Robot soon found itself dealing with all sorts of bizarre hazards, including birds, flying saucers and even huge beach balls. There were also the ever-present Evil Eyes to consider and should you time a jump incorrectly,



▲ If the all-seeing Evil Eye caught you moving then it was curtains for poor Unhappy Interface Robot #1984. Orwellian influence? What Orwellian influence?

OH, THE JOY

As well as being the first game to use filled polygons, *I, Robot* was also the first machine to use Atari's Hall Effect joystick. Initially conceived as a more reliable replacement for the standard analogue stick of many Atari titles, it actually proved to be the exact opposite and added further to *I, Robot*'s problems. Needless to say, Atari updated the stick and later games that used it tended to be a lot more reliable.



a laser would quickly teach you the error of your ways by obliterating your poor robot. At the end of every third level, you would finally gain access to the Evil Eye's pyramid. Once inside, you'd need to collect all the available jewels and defeat the Evil Eye, whilst avoiding the inner pyramid's deadly guardians.

Working out the best way around *I, Robot*'s levels was vital if you wanted to succeed, and as you got deeper into the game the stages became more complex and even included moving platforms. The flying sub-stages did little to detract from the game's toughness, and rather than being simple padding they became just as important (if not more so, for some players) as the main game. Indeed, when you watch your Robot fly through his polygon surroundings and face off against a huge flying head, you can't help but think that Shigeru Miyamoto might have once played Atari's game and stored a few ideas away in the back of his mind. The comparisons between *I, Robot* and *Star Wing* seem too many to be simply down to coincidence.

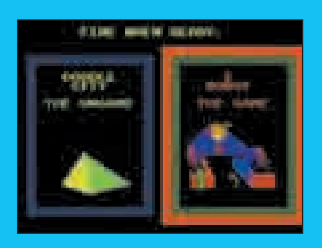
I, Robot's final trick – and one that proved just how ahead of its rivals Atari really was – is the way that the playing view could be manipulated in order to increase your score multiplier. By using two buttons, players were able to cycle through 12 different viewpoints – the lower the viewpoint, the higher the score multiplier. The game was always viewed from directly behind your protagonist and only the most skilled *I, Robot* players could make any sort of progress when the game was set on its highest multiplier.

For all its innovative visuals and ideas, *I, Robot* proved to be too much for the average gamer and it never achieved the success it deserved. Even if it had become a hit, Atari's reliance on the 6116 RAM chip that was placed in every *I, Robot* board proved to be another contributing factor in the game's downfall, due to many boards continually breaking down (though to be fair, the RAM was just one of many hardware problems *I, Robot* suffered from).

It may have been shunned on its release, but *I, Robot* is quite simply a stunning technical and gaming achievement, and fully deserves to be regarded as one of the greatest retro games ever.

WELCOME TO DOODLE CITY

Doodle City **was an interesting extra that was essentially a paint program that enabled you to play about with all the game's polygons. This 'ungame' let you spin objects on three different axes, select six orbit patterns for your chosen shapes to follow and even record what you had created. It was also possible to use whatever time you had left to return to the main game. Unsurprisingly, *Doodle City* was a bit of a non-starter with gamers and many felt annoyed that they had spent a whole credit on what was little more than a time-wasting diversion.**





Presentation: **85%**
Sparse but slick, with the option of two game modes

Graphics **97%**
Outstanding visuals that still hold up today

Sound **78%**
Very basic, yet still atmospheric

Gameplay **95%**
Extremely well put-together with plenty to learn

Lifespan **96%**
There's a massive amount of levels to negotiate

OVERALL **93%**



ROM SERVICE

EACH MONTH, GAMES™ TAKES A LOOK AT THE CURRENT STATE OF THE EMULATION SCENE. THIS MONTH, WE EXAMINE A SIMPLE SOFTWARE FILTER THAT COULD CHANGE THE WAY YOU LOOK AT GAMES. LITERALLY.

Say the word 'retro' to someone and the first image they'll get is most likely one of blocky graphics and fond memories. Going back to one of your favourite games in all its pixelated glory can be fantastic, but who hasn't returned to *Super Mario World* and imagined what it could be like today? A gorgeous new hi-res, 2D *Mario* title is what every Nintendo fan would love to see but most likely never will.

Enter HiEnd3D.com – a website that's been running for little over two years, but already offers a couple of the most impressive pieces of software for retro gamers that we've seen in a while. The hq3x magnification filter (along with its 2x and 4x brethren) represents one of the biggest advances in emulation, period, intelligently calculating edge smoothing from pixel positioning with results superior to any similar technology that's freely available.

As a result, this now finds itself fully integrated into the latest versions of ZSNES and SCUMMVM (among numerous other emulators), and as the scene continues to move forward this and similar pieces of code are likely to become commonplace in making older games look so much nicer than we remember.

GOING STRAIGHT

The results achieved by the filtering process vary greatly depending on the subject. Solid blocks of a few colours are often best, going from pixelated zigzags to perfectly straight diagonals, but when you start to confuse matters the effects are usually less obvious. Complex sprites and digitised characters enjoy little to no enhancement through the extra software and, almost without exception, it's the backgrounds and large, clear areas that benefit most from the process. This means that while, say, *Mario Kart* or *Star Wing* won't look any better than they did back in the day, classics like *A Link To The Past* or *Super Mario World* undergo the surgery and come out looking at least five years younger.

What's perhaps most interesting about this filtering technique is its potential. With a new generation of consoles just around the corner, backward compatibility will be one issue for hardware firms to take into account. What if you could be offered the chance to play all your old GBA games on the forthcoming DS, for instance, and run them through this kind of filtering if you so desired?

Sure, both Sony and Nintendo have started down this road with PSone texture-smoothing on PS2, and the Game Boy Player's subtle smoothing options, but judging by results we've seen so far, something that can make a ten-year-old game look better than something released today could well help swing the balance one way or the other.

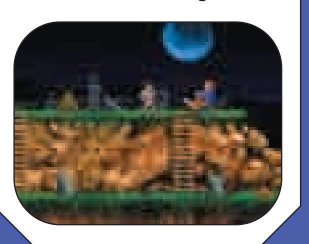


▼ Say goodbye to (most) zig-zagged lines and hello smooth diagonals. Kind of.

▶ New filtering techniques make old games look better than rose-tinted glasses can.

CHANGING ROMS

The Eagle library coded by Dirk Stevens has led the way in filtering, spawning techniques like Parrot and Sai 2x. The main problem with these is that the overall clarity is usually impaired by the smoothing process. Stevens has also been involved with the RetroFX project, trying to spruce up MAME and other emulators. Promised extras included lighting, animation and particle effects galore, but as the strenuous *Ghosts 'N Goblins* update proved, it involved too much work to make a go of it.





I, ROBOT (Arcade) Atari, 1983 – Original arcade flyer



Find a clock, turn it back, then play some old games and review them by today's standards. That's what we've done with three classic titles, but can these games stand up against the current cream of the console crop?



Publisher: Thalamus
Developer: Cyberdyne Systems
Release: 1988
Price: £9.99

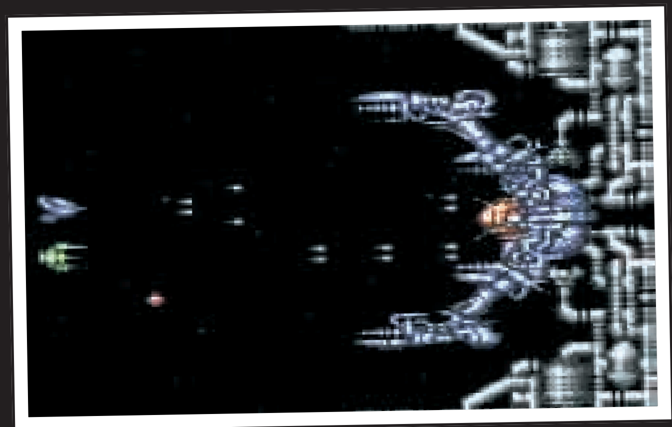
Over the past few years, our beloved C64 has played host to a huge selection of fantastic shoot-'em-ups, with particular favourites being *Zynaps*, *Salamander* and the excellent *Uridium*. Now, though, Thalamus has returned with a sequel to Stavros Fasoulas' excellent *Delta* and it's better than we ever could have hoped for.

Taking place shortly after the events in *Delta*, *Armalyte* is a fantastic blaster that looks gorgeous, plays superbly and features an excellent, evocative soundtrack by Martin Walker. One of our favourite aspects of the game, though, is undoubtedly the drone with which your ship is equipped. Normally, it follows your every move and provides you with back-up firepower (and, by god, you're going to need it). Should the need arise, however, you can detach it and simply let it fire from a static position on the screen; it's a superb little touch and is typical of the thought that's gone into the game.

In order to help you mow down the waves of well-animated opponents, you'll encounter various crystals. Shoot them down and they become ship parts that help increase your craft's firepower. Rear fire, vertical fire and double lasers are just a few of the weapons available and you'll need to be extremely quick on the old trigger, as *Armalyte* is one tough cookie to beat. Honestly, we've never seen so many sprites on our TV screens and you'll be instantly overwhelmed the first few times you play.

Fortunately, collision detection throughout is superb and when you do die, it's always because you made a stupid mistake. Add a great two-player mode (which allows you to nudge your teammate into incoming ships) and some well-detailed sprites that feature terrific shading and you have an instant classic. Commodore64 owners need *Armalyte* in their collection – it's that simple.

WILL *Armalyte* is nigh-on perfect action mixed with the finest sprite work in ages, and it's not all in the epic looks either. As a blaster, it can look *R-type* in its biomechanical eye while holding a tutting finger up to *Salamander's* sluttish inferno effect. One-player and you're in a warm bath of well-thought-out alien onslaughts; two-player and you're vying for power-ups while trying not to punt each other into the path of an ion blast. Thalamus, do you have a sister?



In Retrospect

Armalyte is testament to what great coders could achieve on limited hardware, and while it blatantly stole ideas from other games – especially *R-Type* – it was put together with such panache that you couldn't help but be impressed. The C64 had plenty of superb shooters, but *Armalyte* is one of our favourites.

CRITICISM

Although *Armalyte* is pretty much flawless, there are a few things that we're a touch concerned about. The most obvious is the sheer intensity of the game – this isn't something you can play while sipping a mug of warm cocoa. However, what really gives us the hump is the way that you'll lose all your weaponry once a level has been completed. Honestly, there's nothing worse than battling your way through swarms of beautifully shadowed sprites, only to find yourself stripped of all your hard-earned power ups. Let's hope this is rectified if a sequel is made.

Presentation:	89%
Graphics:	94%
Sound:	93%
Gameplay	95%
Lifespan	83%
OVERALL	**93%**

Publisher: Micromega
Developer: Mervyn J Estcourt
Release: 1983
Price: £6.95

If you're a fan of the Speeder Bike chase in *Return Of The Jedi*, you'll absolutely love *3D Deathchase*. Just like in the latest *Star Wars* film, you get to race through a forest at blistering speed, only this time you're on a motorbike and have to chase after two other riders. Fortunately, your bike is able to fire at your opponents, and providing you can get close enough, it's simple enough to gun them down for points. There's also a helicopter that appears at random intervals and if you manage to hit it, you'll get an even higher reward.

Once both riders are defeated the game switches to night time, when it gets even harder to spot your opponents as they weave through the game's many trees. Once cleared a new day starts, but now there are even more trees to negotiate… While the gameplay can get a bit repetitive, you get such a thrill from

Publisher: Renegade
Developer: Bitmap Brothers
Release: 1993
Price: £19.99

If you thought chasing ghosts or shooting aliens was exciting, wait until you see how great Williams' latest game is. *Defender* is without doubt one of the most intense shooters we've ever played and is a huge progression from the excellent *Space Invaders*.

In Retrospect

Recently re-released on Midway's *Arcade Treasures* collection, *Defender* is still fiendishly addictive and has spawned hundreds of imitators. The gameplay is superbly structured and you'll constantly find yourself going back for just one more go. Even a horrific 3D update wasn't enough to tarnish *Defender's* good name. A true classic.

DEATHCHASE

In Retrospect

While *3D Deathchase*'s simplistic gameplay may be a little bland for today's gamers, it's still a perfect example of 'Twitch Gameplay'. When we heard *Rebel Strike III* would feature Speeder Bikes, we thought of *Deathchase*…

DARRAN The 3D graphics in this game are absolutely fantastic and prove just how powerful Spectrum games can be when they're well coded. I love the look of *Deathchase* and it really feels like you're on a motorbike as you race through the trees – your opponents look realistic and the whole title oozes class. I'm not quite sure if I'll still be playing this in a few months' time, but for the moment I simply can't get enough. Now I can finally 'be' Luke Skywalker…

racing along that you really don't care – and besides, there's always that high score to beat.

The highlight of *3D Deathchase*, though, is the fantastic 3D graphics. Make no mistake, this is probably one of the most impressive-looking games we've seen on the Spectrum. Trees move towards you at a sickeningly fast rate, and as you progress deeper into the game the forest gets even denser and trickier to negotiate. We love the way you can see your hands gripping the bike's handlebars, but crashes are spectacular too. They look great and the whole screen flashes in lots of bright colours – very effective.

We can't get enough of *3D Deathchase*, and if you're an adrenaline junkie, you need to check this out as soon as possible.

Presentation:	78%
Graphics:	92%
Sound:	81%
Gameplay	89%
Lifespan	79%
OVERALL	**88%**





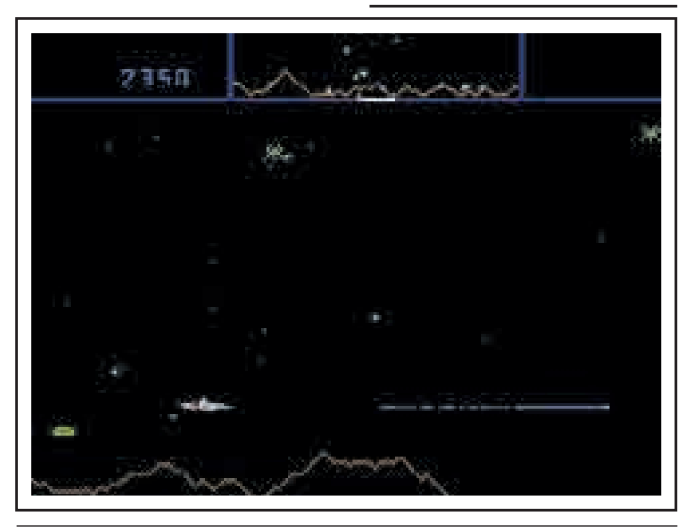
Earth is in trouble and only you are able to save it. Hopping into your amazing Defender spaceship, you must annihilate waves upon waves of vicious opponents and stop them from capturing the world's humans. Should you allow anyone to get captured, you have scant seconds to rescue them before they are taken to the top of the screen and even if you manage to destroy their captors, you still need to rescue the prisoner before they fall to their deaths. Once an alien reaches the top of the screen with its cargo, the captured human mutates into an even deadlier foe.

Fortunately, a huge scanner at the top of the screen shows you exactly where each alien and human is positioned, so you can always work out exactly where you need to be at any time. Once you've destroyed all the aliens, a new wave will appear with even faster foes to dispose of.

The graphics throughout look really cool (especially your ship) and there's lots of variety in the different aliens. One word of warning, though: *Defender* is very, very tough. There are five different buttons to master and the enemies are relentless. Nevertheless, we just can't get enough of it. Check it out the next time you visit your local arcade – you won't be disappointed.

Presentation:	75%
Graphics:	88%
Sound:	89%
Gameplay	85%
Lifespan	90%
OVERALL	**90%**

RYAN Hmm, I'm not too sure what to make of *Defender*. Granted, the game looks really cool and it features some great sound effects, but I'm just finding it too damn tricky to play. Having said that, I've not truly mastered the use of Hyperspace yet (I keep on hitting enemies when I reappear) so I obviously need a little more practice. Still, everyone else on the team absolutely adores it, so I'm going to have yet another crack at it. It's certainly a highly addictive gaming experience; I just wish I could get to grips with all those buttons.



▲ It's a long, hard slog to save the Earth, so you'd best pack a few sandwiches to take with you…

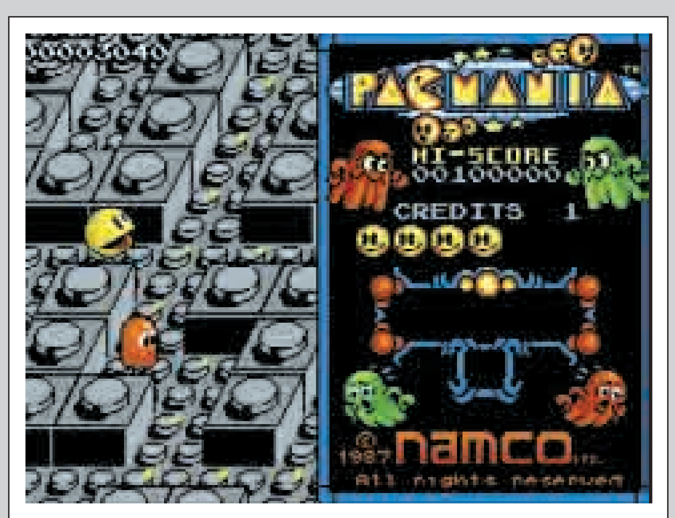
CHRIS EDWARDS



From the Spectrum to Java games via the Amiga, Game Boy and most things in between, game artist Chris Edwards has enjoyed a prolific two decades in the games industry. We caught up with him to find out what got him started...

interviewed by DARRAN JONES

Chris Edwards' first gaming experience will strike a chord with many older gamers. "I was about nine or ten years old," Edwards recalls. "I remember going to the social club with my family where my dad worked, and they had *Pong* and, later, *Moon-Lander* there. I know it sounds sad, but *Pong* really was the first videogame I ever saw." However, while most *Pong* fans merely developed a lifelong love of gaming as a hobby, Portsmouth-born Edwards turned it into a career – and a successful and long-lived one at that.



▲ *Pacmania* was a superb conversion of the smash arcade game and was a big hit for Edwards and the ST.

THE SUMMER OF ZX81

Of course, most of today's developers wouldn't be where they are if it wasn't for Sir Clive Sinclair… "I received a second-hand Sinclair ZX81 when I was 13," Edwards fondly remembers. "I loved that little black box, and I guess my parents did too, as it kept me quiet for hours." Edwards' obsession with his new machine knew no bounds and he was soon typing in games that were printed in magazines. Eventually, his computer studies class gave him the incentive he needed to take things that little bit further, even if the class itself wasn't much use.

"I seriously got into designing videogames when I was about 13 or 14," Edwards says. "I learnt Basic from those annoying magazine program listings, starting with debugging the ones that didn't work too well, and modifying some to make them better. When I wasn't using programs that would 'calculate how much paint it would take to cover this wall', I was trying to hack in to the BBC computers on the Econet system or simply working on my own games. Needless to say, my CS teacher didn't like me very much."

Inevitably, Edwards found himself heading for a career in his beloved pastime and, like many other coders at the time, it initially happened via good old-fashioned mail order. "I submitted a game I had written on the Sinclair ZX Spectrum to Automata UK in response to an advert I saw in their shop window for new games," he explains. "I was 14 at the time, and I dropped in every other day to see if they had looked at it yet. They finally included it on a compilation tape of budget games that they then sold by mail order. They asked me to write more titles, so I wrote three or four more with a school friend doing the graphics. It transpired that he was a better programmer than me and I was a better artist, so we swapped roles for the last couple of games we wrote for them."

FIRST STEPS...

Eventually, Edwards finally got his first proper job as a programmer and artist with Portsmouth-based Catalyst Coders and began working on a conversion of *Flying Shark*, and so began his first experience of working in a team with like-minded individuals. "Catalyst Coders was a nice laidback company, so it wasn't too hard to fit in," Edwards recalls. "It was an enjoyable experience, and I went on to work on conversions of *Victory Road* and *Time Scanner* (amongst others) for the Spectrum and Commodore 64."

One of Edwards' most demanding jobs was actually converting the games themselves, but, as he explains, he was more than happy to take the rough with the smooth. "Sometimes it was fun,

sometimes awful and other times just plain painful," he laughs. "One time we were given £30 and a video camera to go and capture the entire game of *R-Type* in the local pub. We managed to get away with asking for more money for the game, which we duly spent on drinks. Other times we'd be given the arcade board, which we would then hook up to our home-made arcade box and work from that. Once, I was just given a couple of dozen photographic slides to work from to do the conversion of a Bitmap Brothers game – that was just crazy."

Despite the occasionally unconventional working practices, Edwards enjoyed the job and the processes that went with it. "I loved the challenge of reworking one game's graphics visually onto a less capable platform," he explains. "I would start by making a list of everything we could squeeze in, and then prioritise and start roughing them out so the programmers had something to work with. Then I'd go over them and finish them all up."

One of Edwards' greatest achievements was managing to convert *Populous* to the humble NES. Of course, a few sacrifices had to be made, but the end result was an extremely faithful conversion. "Despite very careful planning, we ran out of cartridge space halfway through," he laments. "We had to scrap a lot of the graphics and rework the rest to 'share' as many of the character-based graphics as possible. In the end we had to rework a fair bit, but we got it done. It ran pretty slowly due to the platform, but was a very playable game all the same."

NEW DIRECTION

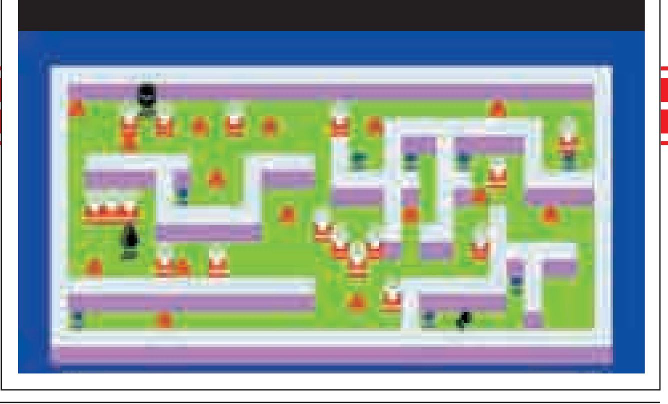
While Edwards is still working in the industry (having dabbled with Java games and now busy with several titles that are closely guarded by non-disclosure agreements), he's getting ready to leave England behind and pursue a new career in what he sees as the next logical step of his interesting journey.

"I'm working on a Game Boy Advance title right now, but am also getting back to real-time 3D… not that I ever really left 3D," he quickly adds. "As for the future, I'm trying to break into CGI for film, TV and advertising. I'm emigrating to the USA to marry my fiancée in July and I have some contacts in New York and elsewhere on the east coast. The game development community is great, but for me the next logical progression is film and TV."

Before he leaves, however, Edwards has a word of advice about breaking into the industry. "Persevere. Don't give up. Study your favourite games and take a course in 3D graphics if you can. Game development can be a hard business to break into, but it's worth spending the time refining your skills… and playing computer games." Sounds like some good advice to us…



▲ *Tiny Troops* is like *Micro Machines* meets *Army Men* and is worth tracking down if you're a fan of the genre.



▲ *The Egg* was Edwards' first game to be published and was a surprisingly enjoyable maze game. Ah, memories…

SOFTOGRAPHY

- The Egg (Spectrum) 1982
- Crazy Castles (Spectrum) 1982
- Pimania (Spectrum) 1982
- Pi In The Sky (Spectrum) 1982
- Victory Road (Spectrum/C64) 1983
- Flying Shark (Spectrum/C64) 1983
- Timescanner (Spectrum/C64) 1983
- Raw (C64) 1983
- Super Sprint 2 (Spectrum/C64) 1984
- Pacmania (Atari ST) 1984
- Battlefield (Spectrum/C64) 1984
- Hawkeye (Spectrum) 1985
- Speedball 2 (C64) 1985
- Savage (Spectrum/C64) 1985
- WarMeks (C64) 1985
- Gemini Wings (Spectrum/C64) 1986
- Captain Blood (Spectrum) 1987
- Space Gun (C64) 1988
- Shadow Dancer (C64) 1988
- Necronom (Spectrum/C64) 1989
- The Champ (Spectrum/C64) 1990
- Psy-Clone (Spectrum/Amstrad) 1991
- Skate City (Amstrad/C64) 1991
- Superboy (Amstrad/C64) 1991
- Superboy 2 (Amstrad/C64) 1991
- Heartstone (Amstrad/C64) 1991
- Kill The Machine (Spectrum/C64) 1991
- Populous (NES) 1992
- Tip-Off (NES/Game Boy) 1992
- Kick Off 2 (PC/Amiga) 1992
- Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt (NES/GB) 1993
- Alien Olympics (PC/Amiga/Game Boy) 1993
- Magician's Apprentice (PC) 1994
- Porky Pig's Haunted Holiday (SNES) 1994
- Tiny Troops (Amiga/PC) 1995
- Phoenix Soccer (PC) 1996
- Earthworm Jim: Menace 2… (GBC) 1999

Retro Contact

Share your views about old-school gaming

First Contact

If you're into retro gaming and you've got something to share with the world, why not write to us at:
games™ Retro, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS Or you can email: gamestm@paragon.co.uk

AGE CONCERN

Dear games™

I really love your retro section and it's the first thing I turn to whenever I buy the magazine, my only wish is that you'd include a bit more 8-bit coverage. It's great to see articles on *Fire Ant* and *Barry McGuigan's World Championship Boxing*, but there are so many other great games that deserve attention.

Being the rather graceful age of 33, I have fond memories of machines like the Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad, and for me these are the true retro machines. Don't get me wrong, I love the coverage in the mag, but I'm not really interested in articles like the Donald Duck Family Tree as they don't really capture what is, for me at least, the golden age of retro gaming.

Gareth Hall, Swindon

■ Don't worry, Gareth, we're fully aware that there's a wealth of great games available for the older systems and we've started to cover those too. By now you've probably already seen our coverage of *Deathchase*, *Armalyte* and *Jack The Nipper*, and this is only the start. We're sorry you didn't like the Donald Duck Family Tree, but the sphere of retro gaming encompasses all sorts of titles. Though we can safely say that no other Disney character will ever grace our pages again. Apart from Mickey Mouse, perhaps. And Goofy. And possibly Donald Duck too… oh, bugger.



AS IF BY MAGIC…

Dear games™

I've looked absolutely everywhere and I can't find the list of screenshots for SEGA's Master System from issue 17. Am I going blind?

Kevin Palmer, via email

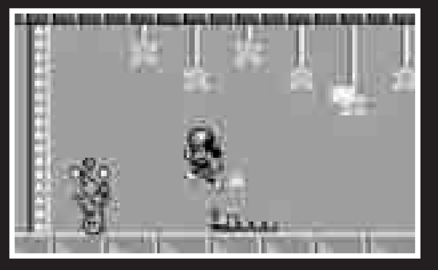
■ Don't worry, Kevin, you're not going blind. The list must have fallen behind the sofa. Or something. Anyway, here it is…

First row, left to right: *Action Fighter, Battlemaniacs, Out Run, Alf, Alien Storm, Alien Syndrome, Ninja, Dynamite Dux, Star Wars, Barcelona 92*

Second row, left to right: *Spy Vs Spy, Predator, My Hero, Rescue Mission, Impossible Mission, Machinegun Joe, Forgotten Worlds, Psycho Fox, Desert Speedtrap, Mickey In Legend Of Illusion*

Third row, left to right: *Sonic The Hedgehog, Double Hawk, Montezuma's Revenge, Aztec Adventure, Dead Angle, PGA Tour Golf, Bonanza Bros, Assault City, Speedball, Thunder Blade*

Fourth row, left to right: *Wanted, Zillion, Daffy Duck In Hollywood, Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade, The New Zealand Story, Asterix, Secret Commando, Captain Silver, Laser Ghost, Enduro Racer*



Fifth row, left to right: *Lord Of The Sword, Air Rescue, Micro Machines, Joe Montana Football, Alex Kidd BMX Trial, Shadow Dancer, Alex Kidd In Miracle World, The Incredible Crash Dummies, Xenon 2, Vampire*

Sixth row, left to right: *Woody Pop, Pro Wrestling, Choplifter, Penguin Land, Donald Duck: The Lucky Dime Caper, Fantasy Zone, Mercs, Hang-On, Desert Strike, Wonderboy*

Seventh row, left to right: *Tennis Ace, Heavyweight Champ, Operation Wolf, Flicky, Dick Tracy, Kung Fu Kid, Deep Duck Trouble, Masters Of Combat, Rastan, Wonderboy In Monster Land*

Eighth row, left to right: *Zool, Rambo, Double Dragon, Teddy Boy, Jungle Book, Mickey Mouse: Castle Of Illusion, Dragon Crystal, Ninja Gaiden, Power Strike, Ecco The Dolphin*

FASELEI FANCY

Dear games™

I was reading the retro section of your mag when I saw the star letter about Gamestation flogging Neo Geo Pocket Colors for £80 with six games (issue 18). I ran down to my local Gamestation and lo and behold there was actually one there! I asked for a look and saw the games were unboxed and consisted of *Pac-man* and some of the less worthy titles like all those slot machine games.

As it happens I already own an NGPC and what I consider to be the best games, having bought them all from HMV for whatever ridiculous price it was on its release, fully aware it was to be taken off the shelves soon. Amongst my purchases was *Faselei*. Blissfully unaware of how sought-after it is until recently, it's just been gathering dust since I completed it (what a game!). In any case, how much is it worth fully boxed with instructions and so on?

STAR LETTER ■ STAR LETTER ■

LONG LIVE SAM & MAX

Dear games™

Wow, four pages dedicated to one of my favourite games of all time. You won't believe how overjoyed I was to see the massive *Sam & Max Hit The Road* feature and I instantly dug out my copy on the PC to play again. When I think about it, LucasArts made loads of amazing point-and-click adventures and I'd love to see games like *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis* and *The Day Of The Tentacle* featured in later issues.

As pleased as I was to see the feature, I'm absolutely devastated to find out that *Sam & Max: Freelance Police* has been cancelled. I'm sure it would have been amazing and really think it would have allowed LucasArts to once again discover its gaming roots and return to the days when it wasn't churning out *Star Wars* licences every other week.

Jeff Thompson, Stoke On Trent

■ Well, you're certainly enthusiastic, Jeff, and it's nice to see so much gaming fervour in our readers. We think you're being a little harsh on LucasArts, but we have to agree that none of its current titles match the quality of any of the games you mentioned. We too were looking forward to *Freelance Police*, but when you look at games like *Broken Sword: The Smoking Mirror*, there obviously isn't the interest in this genre that there used to be. LucasArts' other titles are popular in the office, so it's highly likely you'll see them appear in the future, and we may even look into the decline of the point-and-click adventure. Anyway, have some retro-themed kit for your troubles.



Not that I would ever sell it (unless hard times fall upon me) – I'm just really, really intrigued.

Chris Thomas, via email

■ Ah, *Faselei* – easily one of the best Neo Geo Pocket titles ever, and well worth owning. Prices for the game are fluctuating greatly at the moment, but it seems to be available for around £50-90. If your copy is just gathering dust right now, there are a few people here who'd like to talk to you…

POWERDROME POWERS ON?

Dear games™

I was very interested to read your interview with Michael Powell, as I recall playing *Powerdrome* on the Amiga. I remember it being VERY difficult too – whilst you had the option of Steer Assist, it was too invasive, whereas without assistance progress was either made gingerly or you bounced off the sides if any speed was attempted. Shame, really, as it was very impressive at the time. I trust it will be hidden on the new 2004 release for old times' sake?

Incidentally, will you be interviewing Paul Woakes any time soon? I would love to know what he's been doing more recently. I remember *Encounter* on the 8-bits (I think it was on my Atari 800XL) with great affection. Keep up the good work guys!

Roly, via email

■ Okay, we've got good news and bad news. Well, bad news and promising news, really. The bad news is that the original *Powerdrome* hasn't been included on the new version of the game, simply because it's still owned by EA. However, when it comes to interviews we can be more helpful. The Retro monkeys are busy tracking down the people behind our favourite old-school games, so we'll add Paul Woakes to the list of stalkees, er, potential interviewees. If there are any programmers, designers or artists people would like to see in the Retrospective section, let us know and we'll get on the case.

GONE FISHIN'

Dear games™

The Dreamcast is one of my favourite consoles and with games like *House Of The Dead 2*, *Virtua Tennis* and the *Sonic Adventure* titles, who can blame me? But the most enjoyable game for me has to be *SEGA Bass Fishing* – with its rod peripheral, it's a joy to play.

A friend told me there is a deep sea version of the game also available for the Dreamcast. Could you tell me if this is true and, if so, if it got a European release?

Greig Houston, Glasgow

■ There are actually quite a few other fishing games for the Dreamcast including *SEGA Bass Fishing 2* and *Reel Fishing Wild*. The game your friend's thinking about though is *SEGA Marine Fishing*, which is fantastic as there are plenty of fish to capture and loads of unlockables (including a huge aquarium to fill). Sadly, all these games are NTSC-only, so you'll need the appropriate machine or a Utopia boot disc.



Retro Contact is sponsored by Joystick Junkies. Each month's Star Letter will win its author an item of retro gaming clothing of their choice worth up to £20.



C·L·A·S·S·I·C C·O·N·S·O·L·E

BUYERS GUIDE QUICK REFERENCE

BUYERS GUIDE

It might be easy to play retro games through emulation, but there's nothing quite like owning the original system – that musty smell of ancient electronics can never really be replicated with a PC. Of course, there's always a price to pay and unscrupulous dealers are out to make a quick buck, but you really don't have to pay through the nose if you look in the right places. Charity shops, car boot sales and eBay are all good places to start, but before you do, use our guide to see how much you should be paying…

3DO

Panasonic 3DO	£60
Goldstar 3DO	£50-60

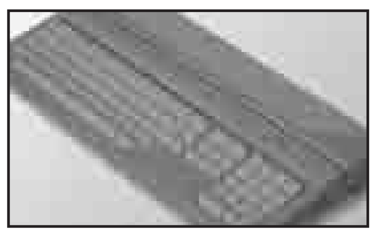
ACORN COMPUTERS

BBC Micro	£50
Acorn Electron	£40

AMSTRAD

Amstrad CPC 464	£20
Amstrad CPC 664	£20-25
Amstrad CPC 6128	£25
Amstrad GX4000	£50

MACHINE OF THE MONTH



- **NAME:** Atari ST
- **PRICE:** £40
- **THREE OF THE BEST:**
  Stunt Car Racer (est. price £9)
  Dungeon Master (est. price £4)
  Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe (est £7)
- It may have been seen as a poor man's Amiga, but the Atari ST was a good system that had plenty of great games. Try car boot sales for bargains.

ATARI

Atari VCS 2600	£30 (wooden models tend to cost more)
Atari ST	£40 (with software)
Atari Lynx	£35 (the original model costs less)
Atari Jaguar	£25

COMMODORE

Commodore Vic 20	£15-20
Commodore 64	£25-35 (varies according to model)
Commodore Amiga	£35-40 (varies according to model)
Commodore CDTV	£50-60
C64GS	£50 (becoming more sought-after)
Commodore CD32	£35

MISC

GCE Vectrex (General Consumer Electronics)	£20-250
MB Vectrex (Milton Bradley)	£175-200
JAMMA compatible cabinets	£100-350 (depending on model)
Supergun	£150-200 (varies according to model)

NEC

PC Engine	£70-80
Turbo Grafx-16	£50-60
Turbo Duo	£100-150
PC Engine GT	£150-200
Super Grafx	£200-250

NINTENDO

Game & Watch	£15-50 (depending on title)
Nintendo Entertainment System	£15-20
Game Boy/Game Boy Pocket	£10
Game Boy Color	£15
Super Nintendo	£20-25
Virtual Boy	£75-100
Nintendo 64	£20-25

SEGA

Master System	£20
Mega Drive	£20-25
Game Gear	£35-40
Mega CD	£40-60
SEGA 32X	£30
SEGA Nomad	£75-100
SEGA Saturn	£30
Dreamcast	£25-30

SINCLAIR

Sinclair ZX-81	£40
ZX Spectrum 48K	£40-50
ZX Spectrum +	£30
ZX Spectrum 128K	£40
ZX Spectrum +2	£35
ZX Spectrum +3	£40

SNK

Neo Geo MVS Single Slot (Arcade system)	£70 (prices for multi-slots are higher)
Neo Geo AES (home system)	£175-225
Neo Geo CD	£125-175
Neo Geo CDZ	£150-175
Neo Geo Pocket Color	£40-50

HOW TO USE GAMES TRADING MARKET

SELLING

Simply send the following to: gtm@paragon.co.uk ■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18) ■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The item(s) you wish to sell (no more than five per month) ■ The condition of the item(s) ■ How much you want for the item(s)

Each item will be listed along with your region.

BUYING

Mail the following details to: gtm@paragon.co.uk ■ Your name ■ Your age (you must be over 18) ■ Your home address and telephone number (this will not be given out) ■ Your email address ■ The reference number for the item you want. Your email address will be passed to the seller, who will contact you to close the deal and arrange payment and delivery. This runs on a first come, first served basis.

WANTED

Contact us in the same way as above stating what items you want and any preferences on condition or price.

GTM RULES AND SMALL PRINT

This service is for private sellers, not dealers. Retro items only (nothing post-Dreamcast). No Mega Drive *FIFA* games – everyone has at least two. Highbury Entertainment Ltd cannot take responsibility for items lost or broken in the post.

BUY & SELL your retro games with games™

GAMES TRADING MARKET

Searching for an elusive copy of Radiant Silvergun? Want to sell that pile of Spectrum games taking up space around the house? Then check out GTM, the most authentic retro sales column in the world.

FOR SALE

LOT 64 – *Battle Squadron* (UK version) for Mega Drive. Boxed with instructions. £2 plus p+p. Bristol. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

LOT 65 – *Circus* (UK Version) for Atari 2600. Boxed with instructions. £3.50 plus p+p. Bristol. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

LOT 66 – *F/A-18 Interceptor* (UK version) for Amiga. Boxed with instructions. £2. Bristol. Contact seller directly: garethcrowley@hotmail.com

LOT 69 – *Harvest Moon* for Game Boy Color. Like new. £16. Bucks.

LOT 70 – *R-Type DX* for Game Boy Color. Like new. £16. Bucks.

LOT 72 – *Aladdin* for Mega Drive. Very good condition. £10. Bucks.

LOT 73 – *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* for Mega Drive. Very good condition. £10. Bucks.

LOT 75 – *Yu Suzuki Gameworks* book with Dreamcast disc of six classic arcade titles, including *Out Run*, *After Burner* etc. Mint condition. £50. Wilts.

LOT 77 – *Golden Axe 3* (Japanese version) for Mega Drive. Good condition with box and instructions. £27 plus p+p. North Yorks.

LOT 79 – *Panzer Dragoon* (Japanese version) for SEGA Saturn. Good condition with box and instructions. £5 plus p+p. North Yorks.

LOT 80 – *Soukyugurentai* (black cover, Japanese version) for SEGA Saturn. Good condition with box and instructions. £35 plus p+p. North Yorks.

LOT 81 – Unboxed Pikachu Nintendo 64 with five games – *Zelda: Ocarina Of Time, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter, Pokémon Snap, Pokémon Stadium 2* and *Mario Tennis*. All in excellent condition apart from *Turok* box. All manuals included. Good working order. £40. Glasgow.

LOT 82 – TV Tuner for SEGA Game Gear. Unboxed, but in good condition. £25 plus p+p. Glasgow.

LOT 83 – *Double Dragon* arcade JAMMA board. Slight problem with sound. £25. Bournemouth.

LOT 84 – *Blue Lightning* for Atari Lynx, decent condition. £18. Suffolk.

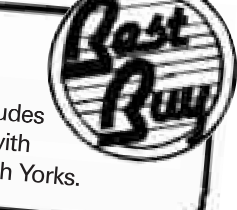
LOT 85 – SEGA Master System (boxed) with five games including *Wonder Boy, After Burner, Out Run* and *Alex Kidd*. All leads and pads included, games unboxed. £40. Bucks.

LOT 86 – *Radiant Silvergun* for Japanese Saturn. Mint condition, includes spine card. £180. Salisbury.

FOR SALE - LOT 76

LEISURE SUIT LARRY

Compilation Disc for PC CD-ROM. Includes parts 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6. Good condition with box and instructions. £1 plus p+p. North Yorks.



WANTED

WANTED 34 – *Disc World* for PlayStation. Must be complete and in good condition. Gloucester.

WANTED 35 – *King Of Fighters 2001* or *2002* for Neo Geo AES. Must be boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

WANTED 36 – Commodore 64 and any games published by either Hewson or 21st Century Entertainment. Manchester.

WANTED 38 – *Mean Machines* magazines. Any issues, but not 3, 14, 15 or 19. Must be in good condition. Price negotiable. London.

WANTED 39 – *Waku Waku 7* or ***Galaxy Fight*** for Neo-Geo AES. Must be boxed with manual. Good price paid. Derbyshire.

WANTED 41 – SEGA 32X. Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £40. Cambridgeshire.

WANTED 42 – *Knuckles Chaotix* for SEGA 32X. Must be in good working order. Will pay up to £15. Cambridgeshire.

WANTED 43 – SEGA 32X games. Any considered. Cambridgeshire.

WANTED 44 – *Sonic CD* for SEGA Mega CD. Will pay up to £30.

WANTED 45 – PC Engine GT Must be in excellent condition, with good sound and no dead pixels. Will pay good money for boxed machine and games. Bournemouth.

WANTED 46 – *Metal Slug* for Neo-Geo AES. Will pay reasonable price for game if in good condition. Essex.

GAMES™ RETRO CLASSIFIEDS

Send to: **GTM, games™, Highbury Entertainment, Paragon House, St Peter's Road, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH1 2JS or email gtm@paragon.co.uk**

Name..

Address..

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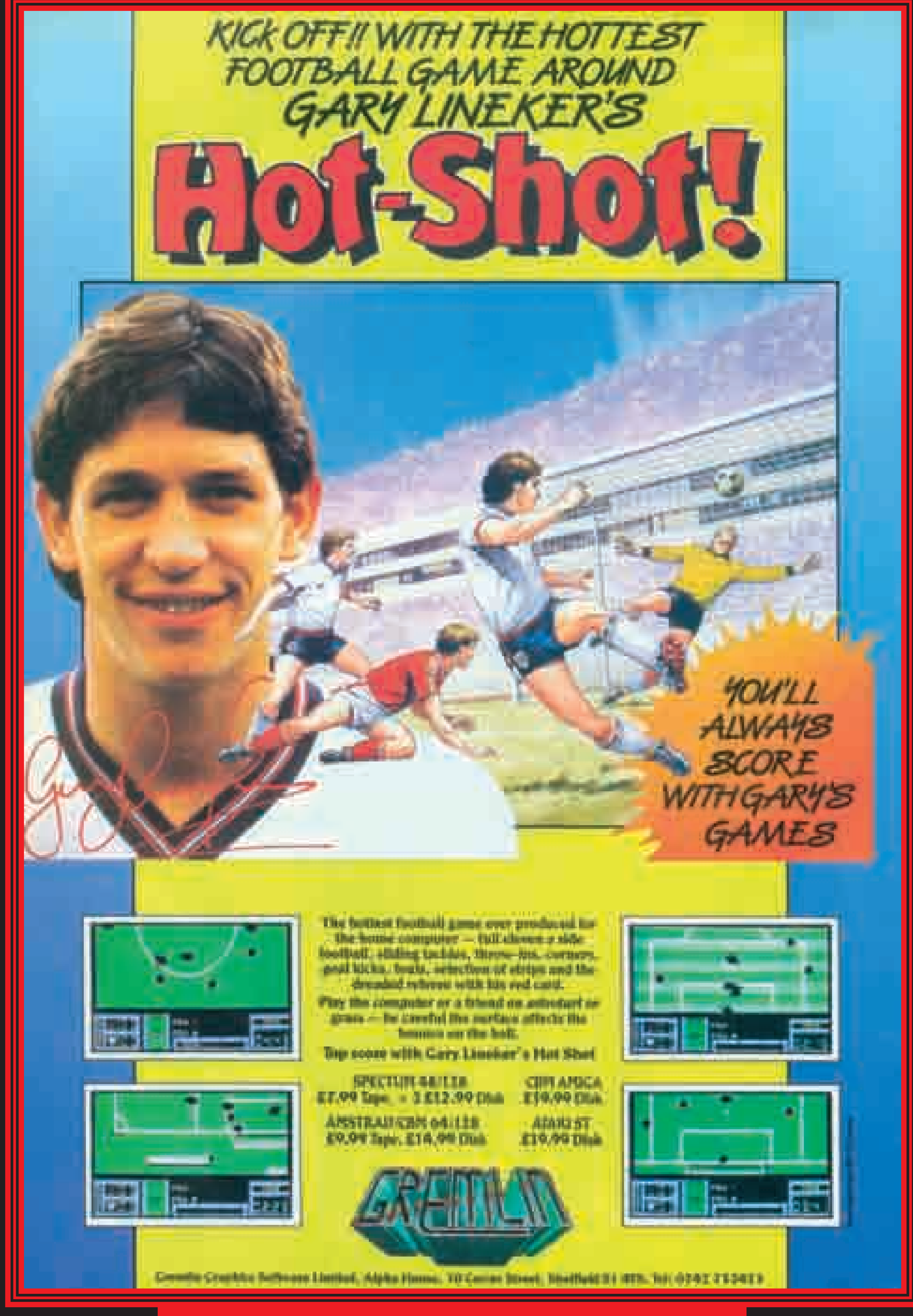
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Write your advertisement here, one word per box, and only include your name, address, phone number and/or email address below if you want them printed.



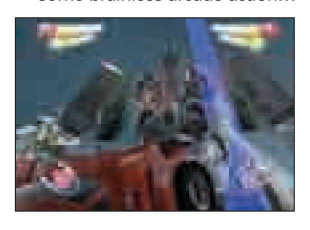
GARY LINEKER'S HOT SHOT (Various Home Systems) Gremlin, 1988 – UK advertisement


eMag

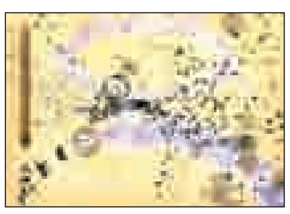
ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

VIEWPOINT
TRANSFORMERS
Atari, take note: massive explosions do not a good game make. You've got to have something more than just lovely-looking robots blasting anything in sight if you want to engage more than just those hungry for some brainless arcade action…



VIEWPOINT
MOJIB RIBON
It certainly looks better than *Vib Ribbon* (what with it being on the PS2 and everything) but for our money, *Mojib Ribon* can't quite match up to the addictive style of its predecessor. Not that it matters, seeing as it's unlikely to come out outside Japan anyway.

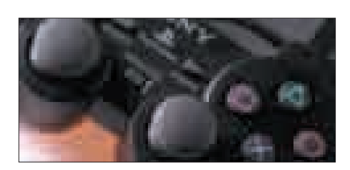


VIEWPOINT
HYPER SFII: ANNIVERSARY EDITION
Perhaps not the essential PS2 purchase that everyone dreamed of, Capcom's celebration of everything *Street Fighter* (the early years, anyway) is still incredibly good fun when played against your gaming friends.



PLAYSTATION2

MANUFACTURER Sony **UK LAUNCH DATE** 24 November 2000 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £139.99



The oldest of the next-generation consoles, having had well over a year's head start over both the GameCube and Xbox. With support across the board from third-party developers, a built-in DVD player and backward compatibility with older PSone games, it's the most popular videogame console available today.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PLAYSTATION2 GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Amplitude	Sony	Harmonix	Music games have never needed as much skill as this
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion	Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	In-House	Realistic racing for the purist in all of us
Dark Chronicle	Sony	In-House	In-depth RPGs don't come much bigger than this
Devil May Cry	Capcom	In-House	The original is still the best by a long shot
Disgaea: Hour Of Darkness	Atlus	Nippon Ichi	Like your RPGs practically endless? Then this is for you
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	Enough content to keep you going for ages
Gregory Horror Show	Capcom	In-House	Bizarre, twisted and yet oh-so-enjoyable
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a game
Ico	SCEE	In-House	Possibly the most beautiful game ever made
Metal Slug 3 IMPORT	Playmore	In-House	Old-school shooting has never been so much fun
NBA Street 2	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The daddy of basketball games – no contest
Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time	Ubisoft	In-House	Ubisoft shows how to make a proper retro update
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House	If you only own one football game, it should be this
Project Zero	Wanadoo	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Rez	SEGA	UGA	Deceptively simple – draws you in before you know it
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
Suikoden III IMPORT	Konami	In-House	Konami's RPG series is still as good as it ever was
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

The Sands Of Time
As beautiful as it is devious, bringing the Prince back was one of the best ideas Ubisoft ever had.



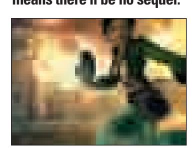
SSX 3
With tons of missions and a massive mountain to explore, *SSX3* is rather good. And it's so damn huge…



Rez
Truly an unappreciated classic – it might not be overly long or complex, but *Rez* is one of SEGA's best.

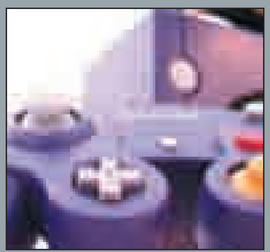


Beyond Good & Evil
We couldn't be more upset that this was mostly ignored – especially since it means there'll be no sequel.



Amplitude
Easy to pick up, insanely difficult to master – but that doesn't make it any less enjoyable.






XBOX

MANUFACTURER Microsoft **UK LAUNCH DATE** 13 March 2002 **MEDIA** 4.75-inch DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £129.99



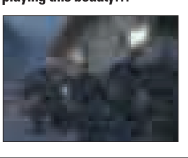
Despite a slow start, the Xbox has swiftly become one of the major players in today's console market. Suggestions that the machine is only 'a PC in a box' are founded upon the built-in hard drive, broadband support and DVD player. However, the Xbox is far more accessible to gamers than most PCs.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE XBOX GAMES

Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
Beyond Good & Evil	Ubisoft	In-House	A fine example of adventuring; well worth the wait
Burnout 2: Point Of Impact	Acclaim	Criterion Studios	Arcade racing at its purest – fun with a capital F
Colin McRae Rally 04	Codemasters	In-House	Realistic racing for the purist in all of us
Deus Ex: Invisible War	Eidos	Ion Storm	Freestyle adventuring with a decent first-person twist
Freedom Fighters	Electronic Arts	Io Interactive	Top-notch squad-based action with an arcade twist
Grand Theft Auto: Double Pack	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North	The best versions of *GTA III* and *Vice City*, without a doubt
Halo	Microsoft	Bungie	The game that sold a million Xbox consoles
Hitman: Contracts	Eidos	Io Interactive	Silent but deadly – a real killer of a title
Jet Set Radio Future	SEGA	Smilebit	Cel-shading at its very best and a soundtrack to die for
Knights Of The Old Republic	Activision	BioWare	One of the best *Star Wars* games ever made
Ninja Gaiden	Microsoft	Tecmo	Damn tough, but a great example of style and gameplay
Panzer Dragoon Orta	SEGA	Smilebit	Classic shoot-'em-up action, the SEGA way
Project Gotham Racing 2	Microsoft	Bizarre Creations	Redefining how we play games online
Project Zero	Microsoft	Tecmo	Scarier than anything else out there today
Rainbow Six 3	Ubisoft	In-House	Fairly decent action-strategy that comes alive online
Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House	The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay
Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow	Ubisoft	In-House	Even better than the original, with a storming Live mode
SSX 3	Electronic Arts	EA Sports BIG	The *Tony Hawk* of the snowboarding world
TimeSplitters 2	Eidos	Free Radical	More multiplayer fun than most other FPS games
Tony Hawk's Underground	Activision	Neversoft	The defining moment in the *Tony Hawk* series

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN…

Rainbow Six 3
The game that brings a new meaning to Live play – many is the night we've lost playing this beauty…



Project Zero
The original still stands out as a perfect example of how survival horror games can be genuinely scary.



Freedom Fighters
IO's sidestep from the *Hitman* series is very playable, especially once you reach the later stages.



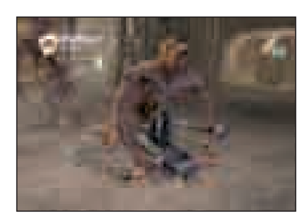
Panzer Dragoon Orta
Really beautiful to look at and absorbing too – if only it had had some adventure elements in there as well.



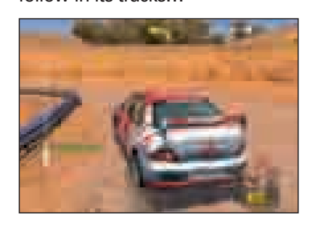
Splinter Cell: PT
Subtly improved over the original with an online multiplayer mode to die for – a definite must-have game.



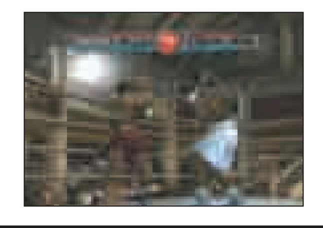
VIEWPOINT
NINJA GAIDEN
Despite initially splitting opinion down the middle of the office, it was at least slightly comforting to know that Tecmo's revival of the classic ninja series is actually really good. Although that doesn't stop most of it from being as hard as nails…



VIEWPOINT
TOCA RACE DRIVER 2
We're beginning to think that anticipating a game isn't a good idea – much as we hoped this one would be a winner on the Xbox, it turned out to have several flat tyres. Thank goodness *RalliSport Challenge 2* didn't follow in its tracks…



VIEWPOINT
FIGHT NIGHT 2004
Trust EA to come up with a quality sports title – mixing together the right elements of simulation and arcade-style action, *Fight Night 2004* stands out as one of the best boxing games around… at least until the next one comes out.



ESSENTIALS

TOO MANY GAMES, NOT ENOUGH MONEY. THANKFULLY, NOT ALL OF THEM ARE WORTH SPENDING YOUR HARD-EARNED CASH ON. IF YOU WANT TO TASTE THE CREAM OF THE CROP, YOU'VE COME TO THE RIGHT PLACE…

VIEWPOINT
LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS+
Where Square's *Crystal Chronicles* failed, Nintendo's *Four Swords+* shows how co-op GBA link play should be done. Whether alone or with friends, it's a real delight, though we're sad the US version will be cut down.



VIEWPOINT
HARVEST MOON: A WONDERFUL LIFE
Blimey – and we thought we hardly had any spare time anyway. Now that we're the proud owners of a flourishing farm with more animals than we care to mention, we don't even know what spare time is.



VIEWPOINT
WARIO WARE INC: MEGA PARTY GAME$
If you got the impression that this is just a port of the GBA original, then you're wrong – it's the multiplayer side of things that really tips the scales in favour of this one. Possibly one of the best party games since *Bishi Bashi.*



GAMECUBE

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 3 May 2002 **MEDIA** 3-inch Optical Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £79.99



Though the GameCube seems destined to struggle, Nintendo's box of delights is still worth a look. While third-party support is dwindling, it's the first-party releases that really offer some quality gaming. Nintendo still makes some of the finest games ever, so missing out isn't really an option.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAMECUBE GAMES

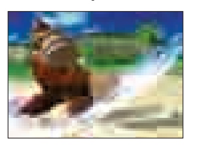
Title	Publisher	Developer	Comment
1080° Avalanche	Nintendo	In-House	A markedly different game to the competition
Animal Crossing IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	The only game to keep us playing for a full year
Eternal Darkness	Nintendo	Silicon Knights	Scary in a different sense – very intriguing
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	Nintendo	Square-Enix	Different from the norm, with a distinct multiplayer flavour
F-Zero GX	Nintendo	Amusement Vision	SEGA does it again with a brilliant retro remake
Harvest Moon: A Wonderful Life	Ubisoft	Natsume	Highly absorbing – the Animal Crossing of farming games
Ikaruga IMPORT	Treasure	In-House	Hard as nails and incredibly addictive
Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour	Nintendo	Camelot	Golfing fun without the need for Tiger Woods
Mario Kart: Double Dash!!	Nintendo	In-House	Another great moment in gaming from Nintendo
Mario Party 5	Nintendo	In-House	Mini-game goodness, whether alone or with friends
Metal Gear Solid: The Twin Snakes	Konami	Silicon Knights	Hardly innovative, but still a great game in its own right
Metroid Prime	Nintendo	In-House	A genre-redefining title in every sense
Resident Evil	Capcom	In-House	Still as scary as it was when it first came out
Resident Evil Zero	Capcom	In-House	An interesting twist on the *Resident Evil* franchise
Soul Calibur II	Namco	In-House	The leader of the pack when it comes to swordplay
Star Wars: Rogue Leader	Activision	Factor 5	Forget the follow-up – the original still has the edge
Super Monkey Ball 2	SEGA	Amusement Vision	Monkeys and balls – what more could you want?
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom	In-House	Looks great, plays even better
Wario Ware: Mega Party Game$ IMPORT	Nintendo	In-House	A party game that'll have you rolling in the aisles
Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo	In-House	One of the many reasons to own a GameCube

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

Soul Calibur II
Surprisingly, the GameCube version is easily the best one – especially if you've got a Hori gamepad.



Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour
A fun golf game that's great with mates – though goodness knows why it's not out over here yet…



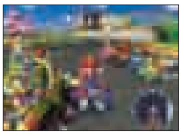
Ikaruga
Vertical shoot-'em-ups don't come much better on the current generation of consoles than this one.

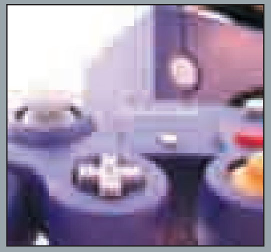


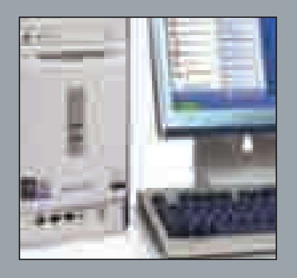
1080° Avalanche
As good as EA's arcade effort, but for different reasons – it's more realistic, but with that magical twist.



Mario Kart: Double Dash!!
It might seem slightly disappointing at first, but get into it and you'll lose days playing until your eyes hurt.

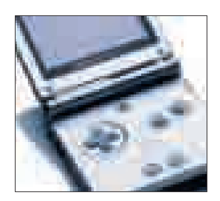


GBA

MANUFACTURER Nintendo **UK LAUNCH DATE** 22 June 2001
MEDIA Flash Cartridge **CURRENT PRICE** £89.99



Ideal for gaming on the move, the GBA is a cheap and effective way of getting games to those who don't have time to sit down and play. The leaps in handheld technology mean that GBA games are now more accomplished and can even be compared favourably to their console-based cousins. The lovely SP model is also available now in a variety of colours.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE GAME BOY ADVANCE GAMES

Title	Publisher		Developer
Advance Wars 2	Nintendo		In-House
Boktai: The Sun Is In Your Hand	Konami	IMPORT	In-House
Castlevania: Aria Of Sorrow	Konami		In-House
Final Fantasy Tactics Advance	Nintendo		Square-Enix
Fire Emblem	Nintendo		In-House
Golden Sun: The Lost Age	Nintendo		Camelot
Harvest Moon: Friends Of Mineral Town	Ubisoft		Natsume
Mario & Luigi: Superstar Saga	Nintendo		AlphaDream
Medal Of Honor: Infiltrator	Electronic Arts		In-House
Metroid: Zero Mission	Nintendo		In-House
Pinball Challenge Deluxe	Ubisoft		Binary 9
Pokémon Pinball: Ruby And Sapphire	Nintendo		In-House
Pokémon Ruby / Sapphire	Nintendo		In-House
Speedball 2: Brutal Deluxe	Wanadoo		Crawfish
Street Fighter Alpha 3	Ubisoft		Crawfish
Super Mario Advance 3: Yoshi's Island	Nintendo		In-House
Super Mario Advance 4: SMB 3	Nintendo		In-House
Wario Ware Inc: Mega Microgame$	Nintendo		In-House
Yu-Gi-Oh!: World Championship 2004	Konami		In-House
Zelda: A Link To The Past/Four Swords	Nintendo		In-House

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

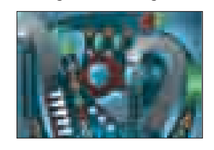
MOH: Infiltrator
A change of pace for the *Medal Of Honor* series, but one that works so well on a handheld – well done, EA



Wario Ware Inc
If you haven't played Nintendo's frantic mini-game bonanza, you really don't deserve to own a GBA.



Pinball Challenge Deluxe
Some of the best pinball games ever, all bundled together on a single GBA cartridge; absolute magic.



PC

MANUFACTURER N/A **UK LAUNCH DATE** N/A
MEDIA 4.75-inch CD/DVD Disc **CURRENT PRICE** £variable



While primarily bought as a work platform, the PC has swiftly become the haven of the more 'mature' gamer. With its natural ability for online and LAN play, it's perfectly tailored for the FPS, strategy and MMORPG genres. However, it can cost a fortune to keep a PC up to date and running fast enough to support flashy graphics.

TWENTY MUST-HAVE PC GAMES

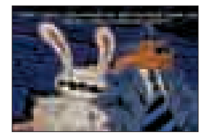
Title	Publisher	Developer
Battlefield Vietnam	EA	Digital Illusions
Call Of Duty	Activision	Infinity Ward
Championship Manager 03/04	Eidos	Sports Interactive
Day of Defeat	Activision	Valve Software
Deus Ex	Eidos	Ion Storm
FarCry	Ubisoft	Crytek
Grand Theft Auto: Vice City	Rockstar Games	Rockstar North
Grim Fandango	LucasArts	In-House
Half-Life	Vivendi	Valve Software
Hidden & Dangerous 2	Gathering	Illusion
Medieval: Total War	Activision	Creative Assembly
Operation Flashpoint	Codemasters	In-House
Pro Evolution Soccer 3	Konami	In-House
Rise Of Nations	Microsoft	Big Huge Games
Sam & Max Hit The Road	Activision	LucasArts
Sensible World Of Soccer	Sensible Software	Renegade
System Shock	EA	Looking Glass Games
The Sims	EA	Maxis
TRON 2.0	Buena Vista	Monolith
Unreal Tournament 2004	Atari	Epic Games

WHY YOU SHOULD OWN...

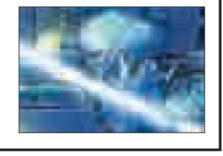
Battlefield: Vietnam
A great online experience, particularly when you meet players who actually co-operate – a rare find.

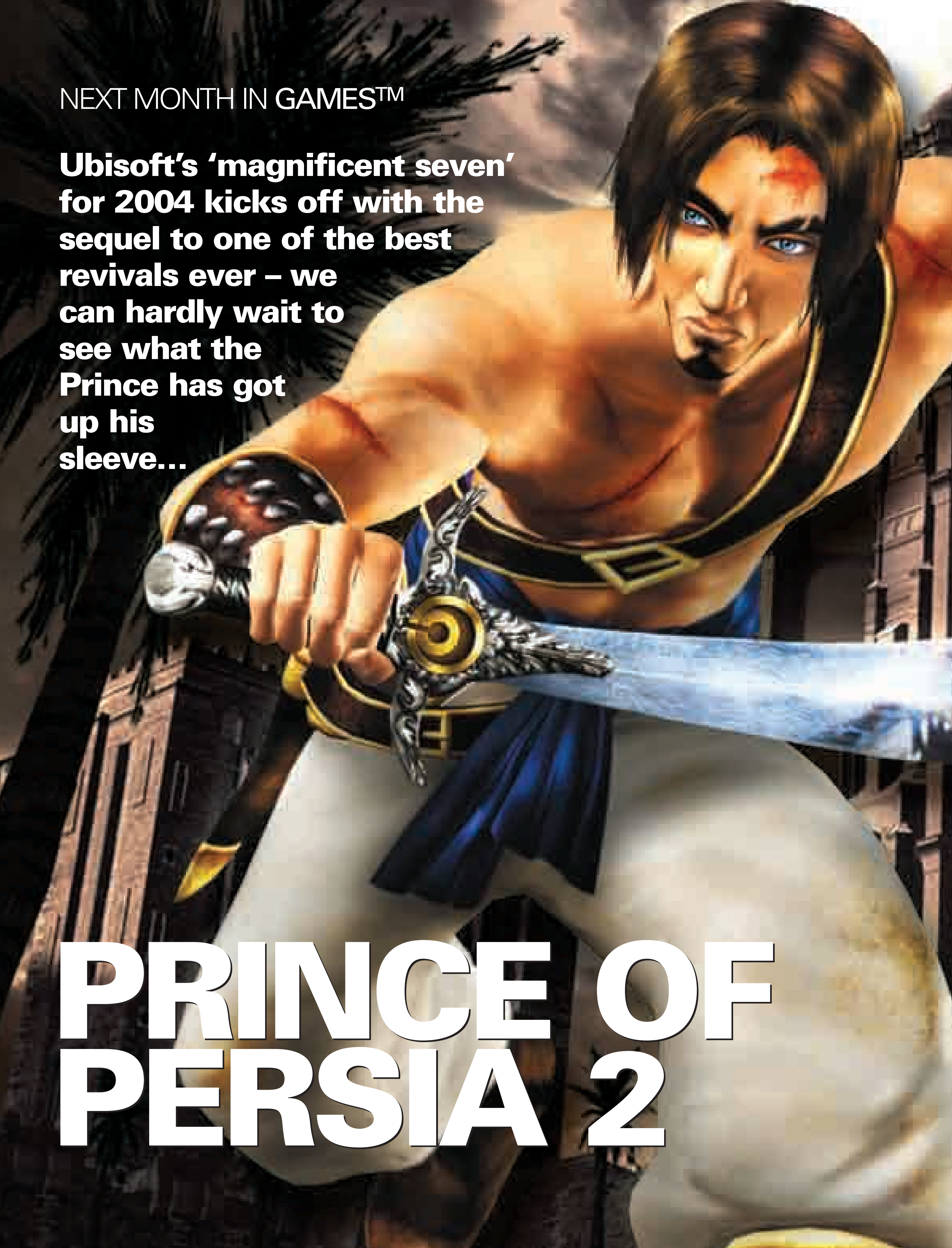


Sam & Max: Hit The Road
Considering the sequel's now been officially canned, getting hold of the original *S&M* is a real priority now.



TRON 2.0
Mimics the movie really well and manages to deliver a satisfying first-person shoot-'em-up to boot.




NEXT MONTH IN GAMESTM
Ubisoft's 'magnificent seven' for 2004 kicks off with the sequel to one of the best revivals ever – we can hardly wait to see what the Prince has got up his sleeve…
PRINCE OF PERSIA 2



NEXT MONTH

180 PAGES OF SULTAN-SLAYING EXCELLENCE

MORE… PREVIEWS

Quite simply, we'll have everything from E3 that we reckon you need to know about – all the games you'll want by the end of the year and then some.

MORE… REVIEWS

Summer's almost here, which means some great games – from *Driv3r* and *Full Spectrum Warrior* to *Onimusha 3* and *Thief: Deadly Shadows*. And that's not all…

MORE… FEATURES

We talk to industry darlings Pandemic Studios about courting not just one, but three major publishers at once; tell you everything you need to know about Sony and Nintendo's new handhelds; and take a look at the plight of the independent retailer.

ON SALE 17 JUNE 04

Please note: Due to late code and unforeseen circumstances and stuff, we can't guarantee that the next issue will actually contain all these things. But it will definitely have *something* in it, like words and pictures and what have you.

CONTACT

ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

ENOUGH OF WHAT WE THINK, THIS IS WHERE YOU LOT GET TO SHOW OFF YOUR RAPIER WIT TO PRAISE, CRITICISE OR MOCK THE GAMES INDUSTRY



The conversational properties of Xbox Live, the future of accessible gaming, and *that* Nintendo documentary – these are a few of your favourite things. Well, we say favourite, more intriguing, really…

MAKING CONTACT

There are many wonderful ways to get in touch with games™. The traditional postal method is perfectly acceptable using the address below:

games™
Highbury Entertainment
Paragon House
St Peter's Road
Bournemouth
BH1 2JS

However, there are quicker ways to reach us thanks to the technological marvel that is the internet. Email us at this address: **gamestm@paragon.co.uk**

Alternatively, why not get yourself on our dedicated forum? Here you should be shielded from multiple spams and infantile remarks. Access to the site has been password protected and only those of you who read **games™** will be able to get onto the site – and if you have bought this magazine then you're not the sort to be abusive and childish, are you? Follow these quick steps to getting on the **games™** forum and enjoy hassle-free chatting with those of us who share a passion for gaming.

Step One:
Get yourself online. It's fairly simple, so we're sure you'll think of something.

Step Two:
Type the following into the browser window: **www.totalgames.net**
You will arrive at the Totalgames website. From here click on the 'forum' icon. News users will have to register via the 'new user' icon – it's a simple step-by-step process which we're sure you can manage.

Step Three:
Once registered, simply email **gamestm@paragon.co.uk** with the password '**OZ**' and your username. Then a whole world of sophisticated wit and games chat will be yours. It says here.

JUST FOR A change why not start using some positive adjectives when describing the GameCube? Instead of 'disappointing', 'failing', or 'worrying', why not try 'inventive', 'productive', 'inspiring'? Even plain 'GameCube' is preferable to the kind of negative press you pour upon it. If the GameCube isn't as successful as it could be the people to blame are yourselves and other clichéd game reviewers. Sadly, as they say, throw enough shit and some of it sticks.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who has been into stores and heard so-called experts discrediting Nintendo and blatantly saying things that aren't true. I heard one almost a year ago where a member of staff was steering a young mother away from Nintendo saying that it wasn't very popular, that there weren't any games for it and there weren't many being released for it in the future. I found this shocking, as it was obviously a quote from above passed down to the grunts on the shop floor. Personally, I'd rather they just shut up.

One thing this country's media don't seem to realise is this is a tiny little country that no-one cares about! Just because the media in this area has pushed people away from GameCube doesn't mean it's failing. Xbox isn't failing because it's only sold 179 units in Japan, is it? The GameCube is huge in the US and in the East and that's all that matters to the big boys – I'm sure that Yamauchi-san doesn't lie awake at night because some crappy store in the UK has decided there isn't enough profit in the Cube.

If Nintendo didn't release another game again there would still be more 'must-have' games on the Cube than any other system. It's time to educate the ill-informed masses, and that means you have a part to play, **games™**.
Mark Baker

games™: No-one, least of all us, has denied that Nintendo continues to create innovative games. However, we also have to report the fact that Nintendo *is* flagging in Europe. Okay, this situation isn't helped by ill-informed shop staff who promote other consoles, but the simple fact is that Nintendo has failed to push the GameCube, failed to court and support third-party developers and, as a consequence, is ultimately the master of its own fate.

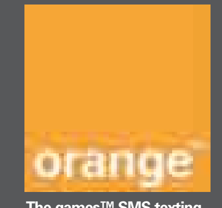
THANKS FOR YOUR excellent and informative article on accessible gaming (issue 18). As an academic researching 3D touch interaction for improving accessibility, it was great to see some recognition for these issues in the mainstream press instead of specialist journals. Although the social implications of gaming (not to mention potential economic benefits) have placed it higher on the academic agenda in recent years, it is fair to

"I REALLY WANT CONVINCING STORYLINES AND REALISTIC ENVIRONMENTS TO PLAY IN, BUT PLEASE LET ME CONTROL WHAT I CAN AND CANNOT DO IN THE GAMING SPACE"

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Is the EyeToy a move towards making gaming more accessible? Possibly…

say that much of the research is dedicated to more fundamental issues such as how do we generate realistic touch and audio feedback? How do people perceive information via computer-generated touch sensations and 3D audio? How can this information be best presented to maximise the benefits for users?

Several projects have tried to exploit these technologies for accessible gaming purposes but, as an avid gamer myself, one thing immediately evident with all these, admittedly laudable, efforts is that academics are not games designers. Beyond the novelty of the actual interfaces themselves, these 'games' would not hold anyone's attention for more than five minutes. Another major barrier for would-be consumers is that current 3D touch interfaces can cost anything up to tens of thousands of pounds. The cheapest devices on the market cost several thousand and require a top-end PC to run them, putting them out of the price range of most home users.

However, if someone were to demonstrate a suitable killer app – such as a genuinely playable, accessible game – it could start to create a demand for these devices. Being able to shift more units may make it more economically viable for companies to start producing lower-cost pieces of kit. I'm sure the non-visually impaired gaming community would also welcome the opportunity to exploit novel interaction devices: just look at the success of innovative designs such as dance mats and the EyeToy, and their mass appeal to a wider audience.

Hopefully, if more can be done to promote accessible gaming, such as your article, someone in the videogame industry will sit up and take notice of all the potential customers and gaming innovations that can be generated from this. Ultimately, good accessible design has the potential to provide benefits for the gaming community as a whole, not just the sensory impaired.

Dr Steven Wall, Glasgow University

games™: The more people that can enjoy videogames the better. Sadly, in the money market of gaming, this could take a while…

IT SEEMS TO me – a 30-something gamer who's been here since the start – that the big games producers are more inclined to steer their projects towards safe, morally righteous gameplay which, rather than allowing pure escapism, tries too hard to teach you how to be a 'good' person like some well-meaning but misguided parent.

But what of *Grand Theft Auto*, I hear you say? Well, yes, clearly there are exceptions, but it seems that this generation of hardware has been swamped by games that have mass-market appeal and gameplay to match. Books and films take constant risks with difficult subjects, but I feel that games are still perceived to be targeted at younger audiences, and producers try to tackle situations by giving the gamer a constant diet of sickly 'right choices' to make rather than an action for an action's sake.

GTA gave me the tools to do and be what I wanted, along with an 18 certificate to ensure that I was old enough to understand the consequences of my actions – this was the kind of game that I expect from this generation of hardware. Yes, I do want convincing storylines

CONTACT
ILLUMINATING THE WORLD OF gamesTM

TEXT LIFE...

☐ my nomination for bachelor's choice award goes to dead or alive beach volleyball. all those in favour say mmmm…
gamesTM: How could we have forgotten such an important category?

☐ Are you guys nuts? Toca is far superior than PGR2. Ive got a good mind to come over there and put rotten fruit in your disc drives.
gamesTM: No it isn't. Come back to us in a couple of months and tell us which of the racers you're still playing. Then we'll see who's wrong.

☐ Yours was the only bad review of sabrewulf. Everyone else seems to think it's great. Me included…
gamesTM: Good for you

☐ …And more to the point, do i get a prize for being more "Hardcore" than you + most of the readership for pointing this out?
gamesTM: You are kidding, right?

☐ Re: Prince of Persia sales, I rented it on all three formats then bought 'cube version, how's that for apathy?
gamesTM: Surely *not* renting or buying it would be more apathetic?

☐ Dudes, i'm not an RTS fan, and i haven't followed the RTS genre. You use the letters RTS six times in the ground control preview. Whathefuck is an RTS?
gamesTM: It's short for 'real-time strategy'. This type of strategy game is not turn-based, but is played continuously and therefore in 'real time'. Dispense with the 'dudes' if you've got any more questions.

☐ mindball? ball-ocks more like!nice try…
gamesTM: As if we would ever try to pull the wool over your eyes.

☐ No games about love ay? Hello! Hamtaro Ham Ham Heartbreak woz all about a street race gang 2 finally destroy the nazi's den woz it. Fools. (",)
gamesTM: Absolutely.

☐ Why is it that the majority of games have a bias to the left on wide screen TVs? On my old TV the picture could be adjusted on RGB input. My new 36" has an…Ugly gap on the right where the picture falls short. If the console set up is set to wide then why does this happen?
gamesTM: A lot of games allow you to compensate for this bias – not that we've ever noticed it ourselves. Look for the 'picture adjust' (or similar) on the menu screen.

"ACCESSIBLE DESIGN HAS THE POTENTIAL TO PROVIDE BENEFITS FOR THE WHOLE GAMING COMMUNITY, NOT JUST THE SENSORY IMPAIRED"

and realistic environments to play in, but please let me control what I can and cannot do in the gaming space. I already have strong moral fibre, all I want to do escape and do things without consequence – there are enough rules in life as it is.
Les Johnson

gamesTM: Surely you have to appreciate that not all games can be tailored to suit an individual's needs (nor should they be), but there are still plenty of games to suit all ages and predilections – just look at the *Star Wars* titles where you can join the Dark side, or any number of MMORPGs where you can carve out a nefarious existence if you want.

☐ **I'VE JUST FINISHED** watching the *Outrageous Fortunes* programme about Nintendo on BBC3 and I have to say that I found it fascinating. Granted most of the information was old news to hardened gamers and the presenter was a bit woolly, but for the newer gamer, there was plenty to learn. I doubt many gamers were aware of Nintendo being accused of monopolising the market and forcing up its prices by 30 per cent during the Eighties and Nineties. There were also plenty of little snippets during the show, such as The Love Tester, The Spot (the first bar in the US to have Donkey Kong) and lots of old Nintendo adverts that were broadcast in the US.

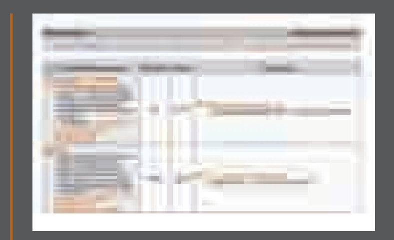
The epilepsy feature was a real eye-opener, although it was a little unfair that the presenter failed to mention the likes of Sony and Microsoft, laying the blame purely at Nintendo's feet. Overall, I believe that this show was a step in the right direction and shows that serious programmes can be made about videogames without resorting to a wacky presenter and a thumping techno soundtrack. But why was it on BBC3 rather than BBC1 or BBC2 where it would have garnered a far larger audience?
Ryan Summers

gamesTM: Though we get your point, the fact remains that most of what was reported was either inaccurate or biased. And while we appreciate the fact that gaming appeared on television in a slightly mature fashion for once, the result was disappointing (see pages 8-9).

☐ **I'VE JUST SPENT** an hour trying to get a game of *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow* on







FROM THE FORUM

DON'T SPOIL A GOOD THING. PLEASE…

get2sammyb
After buying a copy of *Phantasy Star Online* and realising that I can't play it without paying a monthly fee, I became worried that this may become the future of gaming. Personally, I think SEGA has been cruel in its hunt for money – I mean, as if buying a game and an Xbox Live subscription is not enough. What's your opinion?

RetroBob
Subscriptions for online games are a disgrace – people already pay for the online service and the game itself so gamers shouldn't have to pay even more to play online. I dread the coming of the phrase 'pay per play'.

Big Boss
I realise the money is necessary for upkeep of the servers and staff and so on. But I find it ridiculous that you should pay to get a game, and then have to pay to play it after that. Even if it deters fools, and maybe hackers, idiots always ruin it for the rest of us.

The Baker
Isn't this Nintendo's argument? It says it doesn't want to force players to pay for the game, the service and a subscription. It has said that it only wants to go online if you don't have to pay for the privilege, or pay once (i.e. a yearly subscription to Nintendo that will cover all online games).

feltmonkey
Or in other words, ensure that all the money goes to Nintendo (excuse my cynicism). The monthly subscription is the way all online RPGs will go, I'm afraid. It's the reason why I don't play them, and probably never will. The subscription fees seem so high – why does it cost £10 a month per player to maintain the servers? I'm no expert, but I think we seem to be being overcharged. If Xbox Live can be maintained with a £40 yearly fee (which includes the headset), why are these MMORPGs so expensive?

FooAtari
I don't agree with per-play charging, but perhaps if SEGA is not using Live servers (is that possible?) then it would not receive anything from Microsoft for maintaining servers, meaning SEGA would need to charge extra.

Jetman
I wonder what percentage of gamers around the world actually have the money to pay for these games and play them online.

get2sammyb
Exactly my thoughts, Jetman. I will use up my 60 free days, and then I guess I won't be playing *Phantasy Star Online* again!

first_samurai
Does anyone remember a set-top box made by Pace (the company that makes the Sky set-top boxes) that you could download and play Dreamcast games on? The demise of the Dreamcast saw the end of that idea but obviously the technology is there. I believe that this idea might be resurrected at some point by console developers – you'll buy the machine, but any games will be on a subscription basis; you will never own the game, just play it. Think that it'll never happen? Think again: developers will not need to package the game and all that that involves, and there'd be no need for shops (or staff) to sell them – think of the money that publishers would save. Personally, I am glad to be stuck in 16-bit land.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

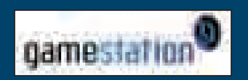
AM I THE only gamer in the world not looking forward to the next generation of consoles? It seems to me that the only thing people want to talk about is what's coming next. Call me crazy, but I don't relish the idea of my existing hardware (PS2) becoming obsolete, especially since it has (in my opinion) yet to reach its potential. Yes, there are many good games available, but what about all the promises Sony made in the build-up to the release of the PS2? The Emotion chip, anyone?

So now we hear that PS3 will have an EyeToy built in. Whoopee! There is a perfectly good peripheral one available right now, and after a staggering response from the public, what are the developers doing with it? Playing ruddy Quidditch cards on it in the latest bit of Harry Potter tat. Oh, and mumbling about its importance to the PlayStation3.

I know these things all come with built-in obsolescence, and that if technology doesn't march on then it stagnates, but this whole willy-waving exercise over who can get their next-gen console out first is not helping anyone – especially the consumers. So a little more consideration, a lot more time between generations (I could happily explore the games for the PS2 for a number of years yet) and forget 'beating the opposition to the shelf'. One look at the PSX should tell you all you need to know about rushing out hardware to seize the edge.

Aidan McKenna

games™: You're right, you know. Thing is, manufacturers think that by being first to get their console out they'll be the most successful. Okay, that's not the case, but will they listen to us? Will they dammit. Have some vouchers to buy some PS2 games.



If you'd like to line your pockets with £100 of Gamestation vouchers then send us a games-related letter crammed with sparkling wit and pertinent points. Extra marks will be awarded for neat handwriting.

Xbox Live. Having no friends, I was restricted to gatecrashing random games and hoping I didn't get kicked out. I entered the first game, cap in hand and on my best behaviour, only to find myself in a lobby full of chatting Frenchmen. My French isn't great (I can ask what time the swimming pool closes, but that didn't seem relevant) so I kept quiet and waited for the game to start. And waited. And waited to no avail. It seemed the other three were content to jabber away to each other, so I left.

The story was the same in the next room, and the one after that, and the one after that. The only variation was when the rooms' inhabitants were talking in English. No-one at all seemed to be playing the game! At least one Frenchman had the good manners to say 'Zis is not a game. We are not playing'.

What's going on? There seems to be a growing phenomenon of people using Xbox Live as a chatroom and not even bothering to play games. Why? It is incredibly irritating to those of us who want to sneak around or shoot people, rather than witter on about swimming pools and what time they close. Perhaps the moral of the story is: get some friends.

Morgan Fellows

games™: We've noticed this too, and we are, at times, guilty of it. However, we've set up a 'friends only' server so as not to be disturbed by people we don't want to play against (which is something all like-minded gamers should do). Then we can bang on about the weather and other weighty subjects without the bother of playing games…

“Pizza time!”

